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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Aspects of 'Mass' Culture in Selected Works by Henry James and Saul Bellow

by

Aicha Gaboune

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
Spring 1990

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Aspects of 'Mass' Culture in Selected Works by Henry James and Saul Bellow submitted by Aicha Gaboune in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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External Examiner
Kay L. Stewart

Date December 19, 1989

Dedication

To Mohamed, Fatima-Miloud, Brahim and Mustapha.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. C. Bullock, Dr. K. Stewart, and Dr. M. Ross for their help and encouragements.

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that though Henry James and Saul Bellow come out of two different heritages--Anglo-Saxon and Jewish--and though they live in different periods of time, they recognize that American culture is endangered by the expanding of mass culture. They do not use this term, but they offer a clear description of the phenomenon.

The theory of the phenomenon is derived from culture critics, like Matthew Arnold, F. R. Leavis, José Ortega Y Gasset, and Dwight Macdonald. I examined these theorists in order to drive a working definition of the term "culture," and to help me identify the main issues and problems involved in mass culture. The thesis examines the effects of "mass culture" on the structures of American society as these structures are presented in the works of Henry James and Saul Bellow, especially through male/ female relationships.

In the first chapter, I show that in *The Europeans* James depicts an organic community, which allows for strong bonds among most of the characters in the novel. In the second chapter, I examine *The Bostonians*, where James looks at the same culture but in a period of destabilization as the United States enters an era of rapid industrialization after the Civil War. Through the various relationships portrayed in the novel, James presents a society in turmoil, a society which experiences the breakdown of family unity,

the disintegration of traditional values and the devaluation of traditions and authorities.

Bellow's novels examine American culture at a critical stage. The third chapter focuses on *Herzog*, which puts much emphasis on the breakdown of the Jewish patriarchal system, and the problems which accompany the changes in man's and woman's roles in society. The fourth chapter deals with *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, which focuses on, among other things, what Artur Sammler describes as "the sexual madness" which overwhelms the Western world. The last chapter concentrates on *The Dean's December*, which stresses the triumph of the media and its negative impact on culture.

This thesis comes to the conclusion that James' and Bellow's concerns about American culture and the threats it faces in the form of mass culture are well-founded since most fundamental beliefs and principles are falling apart. However, Bellow, who is generally optimistic about the future of humanity in spite of what he recognizes as a critical period in Western civilization, gives in to despair in *The Dean's December*, where he leaves us with a sense of doom about the future of individuals in a declining culture.

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I. Introduction

Although Henry James and Saul Bellow come out of two different heritages--Anglo-Saxon and Jewish--they provide similar critiques of American culture. They agree that American culture is endangered by the growing authority of mass culture. But they come at the problem from different starting points, and, therefore, they offer different approaches to the issue of how to preserve 'genuine' culture. James insists that the intellectual elite is the safeguard of the "tradition of sensibility." Bellow's approach, however, is complicated by his ambivalent stand on American democracy. On the one hand, he is the champion of democratic equality; on the other hand, he leans towards the Jamesian view that the survival of culture depends upon an "intelligent zeal," which endeavors to preserve culture from the pressures posed by democracy.

James and Bellow do not offer a clear definition of the term "mass culture", nor do they identify or refer to the pressing threats they depict in their works as "mass culture." Nevertheless, I will situate some of their best works in the wide debate on culture because, in their writings, they provide an assessment of American society which includes and emphasizes many aspects defined and known among cultural critics as "mass culture".

I derive my understanding of the phenomenon from culture critics: Matthew Arnold, F. R. Leavis, José Ortega Gasset, and Dwight Macdonald. I examined these theorists in order to isolate and specify the main issues and problems involved in the meaning of mass culture. Arnold offers a definition of the function of real culture; Leavis puts into perspective the enormous effects of the media and its "levelling tendencies" on culture; Ortega provides an illuminating distinction between "mass man" and man of culture; Macdonald agrees with the other critics that culture is facing tremendous pressures from mass culture, and he goes a step further in defining the phenomenon. In other words, these critics offer directions, categories, and patterns I will look for in some of James's and Bellow's works.

In a famous passage, Arnold describes culture as

> the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world.[1]

Moreover, "culture. . . is the study of perfection. . . as a *harmonious* perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a *general* perfection, developing all parts of our society" (*Culture* , p. 11). For Arnold, there are two aspects to culture: it develops humanity in individuals, and it stresses the development of all aspects of society. Arnold offers "culture" as the alternative to "anarchy," a term he uses to describe taxing realities such as the effect of industrialization, the rise of the media, and the emergence of the masses as political and social powers, changes which western civilization witnessed during the period of transformation which accompanied the Industrial Revolution. Culture, according to Arnold, is the "principal authority" to "counteract" any form of disorder.

---

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* , ed. J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: The University Press, 1960), p. 6.

F. R. Leavis, who published some of his early writing on culture in the 1930s, about half a century after Arnold, finds the word "culture" more problematic to define than Arnold because of the complexity of the situation which is caused by the uncontrollable changes in the twentieth century.[2] Nevertheless, in his pamphlet "Mass Civilization and Minority Culture," which first came out in 1930, Leavis elaborates on Arnold's view and argues that the mass media have a destructive effect on culture. He sees that films have more disastrous effects on the public's mind than the newspaper; they have a "more potent influence" since they not only are the public's "main form of recreation" but they reduce masses of people to a passive and "hypnotic receptivity." Consequently, the outcome is the fact that "a standardized civilization is rapidly enveloping the whole world" (*E & U*, p. 169).

In *Culture and Environment* , Leavis offers a definition of culture which goes beyond Arnold's limited use of it to the awareness of the best writing of the past. Leavis argues that the introduction of the machine to the western world has destroyed a way of life: "What we have lost is the organic community, with the living culture it embodied. . . . an art of life, a way of living, ordered and patterned, involving social arts, codes of intercourse and a responsive adjustment, growing out of immemorial experience, to the natural environment and the rhythm of the year."[3] He suggests that "it is on literary tradition that the office of maintaining continuity must rest" and "literary education. . . is to a great extent a substitute" for the lost culture. By offering literature and a literary education as a substitute for the lost "community with [its] living culture," he returns to an Arnold-like definition of culture, a definition which limits it to a particular class. Yet his initial broad definition offers us a valid perspective. Culture does not belong to just a few; it is a way of life which transmits itself to all people who live by the same social and traditional values; culture allows them a sense of identity that is different and distinct from other groups.

---

[2] F. R. Leavis, "Mass Civilization and Minority Culture," *Education and the University*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1943), p. 143.

Leavis underlines the destructive effects of industrialization on "the organic community" with its living culture. The swift changes which sweep the modern age result in a growing urgency that is conveyed by those who have concerned themselves with keeping culture alive and effective. Leavis warns that "it is a commonplace to-day that culture is at a crisis" (*E & U*, p. 145).

José Ortega Y Gasset explains the effects of the sudden transformation from the organic community to mass society. His book, *The Revolt of the Masses* , which was published in 1930 and translated into English in 1932, is exemplary for the clarity with which it discusses the phenomenon pointed to in the title. Ortega argues that the industrial revolution brought about drastic changes. The masses, who in the past followed the leadership of the aristocratic minority in political, social and economical matters, now emerge, as a result of universal suffrage, as a substantial power, dominating the social scene and seeking to "supplant" the minorities.

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[3] F. R. Leavis & Denys Thompson. *Culture and Environment* , (London: Chatto & Windus, 1933), pp. 1-2.

While Arnold classifies the masses as those left over when the intellectuals, who do not necessarily belong to any particular social class, are skimmed off, Leavis defines the minority as "a few [who] are capable of unprompted, first-hand judgment," (*E & U*, p. 143) Gasset defines the masses not as the workers, and not as the members of any particular class. On the contrary, the mass man is found in all social classes.[4] In his study, Gasset distinguishes between the mass man and the man of culture. He describes the latter as "the select man, the excellent man," who "is urged, by interior necessity, to appeal from himself to some standard beyond himself, superior to himself, whose service he freely accepts" (p. 69). On the other hand, "the mass," according to Gasset, "is all that which sets no value on itself--good or ill--based on specific grounds, but which feels itself 'just like everybody,' and nevertheless is not concerned about it; is, in fact, quite happy to feel itself as one with everybody else" (p. 15). He adds to that the following characterization: "the mass crushes beneath it everything that is different, everything that is excellent, individual, qualified and select" (pp. 18-19). This emerging type, which does not live up to any standards, considers itself "the lord of things." And since the mass man does not believe in any superior authority, he makes the rules he likes. He develops a careless attitude; he has, as Gasset puts it, "the psychology of the spoilt child."

---

[4] José Ortega Y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* , (New York: Norton & Company, 1932), p. 120.

> To spoil means to put no limit on caprice, to give one the impression that everything is permitted to him and that he has no obligations. The young child exposed to this regime has no experience of its own limits. By reason of the removal of all external restraint, all clashing with other things, he comes actually to believe that he is the only one that exists, and gets used to not considering others, especially not considering them as superior to himself (p. 64).

Like Arnold, Gasset recognizes both the importance of standards, and the threat of "anarchy". This depiction of the mass man can be easily applied to various characters portrayed in James's and Bellow's works I undertake to examine. The mass man contributes to the destruction of culture by obliterating its forms of order:

> There is no culture where there are no principles of legality to which to appeal. There is no culture where there is no acceptance of certain final intellectual positions to which a dispute may be referred. There is no culture where economic relations are not subject to a regulating principle to protect interests involved. There is no culture where aesthetic controversy does not recognize the necessity of justifying the work of art (p. 79).

"Principles of legality" derive their meaning and relevance from the stability of culture. But when culture is subjected and overpowered by the changes of the age, "Things fall apart," as W. B. Yeats puts it in his poem, "The Second Coming" (1921) "The centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."

Dwight Macdonald addresses this aspect of "anarchy [which] is loosed upon the world" as mass culture. Like Gasset, Macdonald believes that since the industrial revolution, "the traditional culture" of the west "has been under pressure from mass culture." Mass culture, or "Masscult," as he chooses to name it, is "a parody of High culture. . . . It is not just unsuccessful art. It is non-art. It is even anti-art".[5] In fact "masscult" is "merely a manufactured product like Kleenex, mass-produced for the market by technicians, hired by businessmen" for the tired audience, whose purpose is "neither an emotional catharsis nor an aesthetic experience," but "merely distraction" from daily preoccupations.

In Macdonald's view, the masses are themselves products of the industrial revolution which caused people to be uprooted "from their agrarian communities and packed into factory cities". This results in a mass society. In Macdonald's eyes, "masscult" is produced particularly for an audience dehumanized by its environment. Its indifference to standards forces its members to surrender to the potent and ubiquitous influence of the media. They are spared any immediate experience which demands a sense of discrimination. Macdonald describes the absence of the immediate experience as follows: the "Built-In Reaction" which is one of the requirements of masscult which "spares [the spectator] effort, provides him with a shortcut to the pleasures of art that detour what is necessarily difficult in the genuine art because it includes the spectator's reactions in the work itself instead of forcing him to make his own responses" (*Against* , p. 29). In such a society, "the mass man is a solitary atom that goes to make up 'the Lonely Crowd,'" which means that in such surroundings, people "are not related to each other at all but only to some impersonal, abstract, crystallizing factor" (*Against* , p. 8). As a result, there is a strong longing for self-identification and individuality. Hence, the personality of the producer is crucial to the "lonely crowd.' ". . . People feel a need," Macdonald explains, "to be related to other people. The simplest way of bridging this distance, or rather of pretending to bridge it, is by emphasizing the personality of the artist" (*Against* , p. 25). What matters to the producers of "masscult" is not the quality of what they provide, but how much profit they make on the market.

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[5] Dwight Macdonald, *Against the American Grain* , (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), p. 4.

Macdonald acknowledges the existence of two distinctly separate cultures: one for the populace and one for those who care for culture. He advocates maintaining this separation. He puts it as follows: "So let the masses have their Masscult, let the few who care about good writing, painting, music, architecture, philosophy, etc., have their High Culture, and don't fuzz up the distinction" (*Against* , p. 73). His plea demonstrates a sense of frustration more than it presents a logical solution to such a complex issue. I would argue that the ideal is a unified culture which recognizes and encourages the diverse interests and diverse growth that people go through. Macdonald's understanding of culture is not only limited to its aesthetic forms: "good writing, painting, music, architecture and philosophy" but also to a minority who is qualified to appreciate it.

Culture is a way of life which can be shared by any group of people who live by the same principles, beliefs, and values.

I will argue in light of these theorists' views that there are various aspects of mass culture in selected works by Henry James and Saul Bellow, and that both authors see American culture as threatened by "anarchy". I will look at man/woman relationships in order to determine the quality of culture they come from. The breakdown of family unity evokes the nature of a culture where the fundamental basis of customs and traditions are shaken. The nuclear family no longer provides protection from the social and political changes which sweep modern society. As a result, human connections become difficult to establish, especially in city milieux which enhance feelings of isolation. And the only way to alleviate this sense of alienation is to resort to sex which is increasingly becoming a symbol of the new norms which have been propagated by the mass man who controls the media. With the breakdown of family values and the dissolution of social institutions, the media become the central cultural authority.

Although James and Bellow belong to different periods of time and different backgrounds, they have similar concerns about the health of American society. Because of his experience in Europe, James assesses his country from a European perspective. And, although Bellow has spent most of his life in the United States, he maintains that "there's enough European in [him] to be able to look at America as a foreigner".[6] While James's sensibility is transplanted from America to Europe, Bellow brings European sensibility to the United States. Because of their different backgrounds and wide experiences, and because they write novels and not theories, both James and Bellow provide an insightful examination into and an interpretation of American democracy.

---

[6] Jo Brans, "Common Needs, Common Preoccupations: An Interview with Saul Bellow," *Southwest Review* 62 (1977), p. 14.

In this study, I will first examine James's *The Europeans* , then *The Bostonians* , and finally Bellow's *Herzog* , *Mr Sammler's Planet* and *The Dean's December*. I will demonstrate that there is a change from the stable and established New England culture as presented in James's *The Europeans* to the deteriorating culture in *The Bostonians* to the ascendency of mass culture in Bellow's works.

I will demonstrate that in *The Europeans* , James depicts, through various relationships, some constructive and inviting aspects of American culture. Although New Englanders are not completely open to diverse forms of civilization, they exhibit an ideal sense of community that accentuates vital values, such as family unity, individuality, stability and equanimity. In order to bring forward the values of American culture, James sets the story significantly in that "earlier and simpler generation" of the pre-Civil war as he describes it in his study of Hawthorne, in a rural area about seven miles and a half from Boston.[7] The way New Englanders interact with each other reminds us of the fact that they derive their common values, practices and interests from established heritages: Puritan and democratic traditions allow for an "organic community with the living culture it embodied" (*Culture and Environment* , p. 1-2). To put these cultural values into perspective, James introduces into New England, two Europeans, Baroness Münster and her brother Felix Young.

---

[7] Henry James, *The Europeans: A Sketch* , (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 53.

The novel provides a balance between New Englanders' best qualities and their limitations. The two Europeans are not spared from James's ironical skepticism. The Baroness is exposed especially for her use of art for concealment and theatricality. Acton and Eugenia fail to unite because they are so deeply enclosed in their respective cultures. On the other hand, in Felix Young and Gertrude Wentworth's marriage, James establishes a symmetry between European and American perspectives. Felix and Gertrude achieve "a synthesis of the various national tendencies"[8] of both Europe and the United States.

I include *The Bostonians* in order to look at American culture in a different phase of its transformation and growth. The novel is one of the few major works of James which has an American setting and which deals extensively with an American subject. In his *Notebooks*, James summarizes his intention in the novel: "The whole thing as local, as American, as possible, and as full of Boston. . . . I wished to write a very *American* tale, a tale very characteristic of our social conditions."[9] It is set in a period of destabilization and dislocation as the United States entered an era of uncontrollable changes and rapid industrialization after the Civil War.

---

[8] Leon Edel, *Henry James Letters*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 77.

[9] F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock, eds. *The Notebooks of Henry James* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 47.

In his book *Culture and Conduct in the Novels of Henry James* , Alwyn Berland contends that James's

> fiction yields extraordinarily little reflection or comment on the political, social, economic processes of history or of contemporary life, even if some of his implicit attitudes do reveal themselves from time to time. James's term is much closer to the earlier, non-sociological definition of culture.[10]

While it is fair to say that James is not a social critic, and that his writing does not always concentrate on social situations, in *The Bostonians* , however, he strives to scrutinize American culture and register the social and economic changes which have significant bearing on the way men and women relate and interact with each other.

I will show by examining the various relationships depicted in the novel that James portrays a society in great turmoil, a society which experiences the breakdown of family unity, the malfunctioning of common values , the devaluation of traditions and authorities. James narrows the focus of the novel when he goes on to say in his *Notebooks* that, "I asked myself what was the most salient and peculiar point in our social life. The answer was: the situation of women, the decline of the sentiment of sex, the agitation on their behalf" (p. 47). James uses the women's movement, represented in Olive Chancellor, as a point from which he scrutinizes American society. He introduces Basil Ransom, a Southerner, whose ideal is to preserve the old order within the new reformed worlds of Miss Chancellor, the worlds of Boston and New York.

---

[10] Alwyn Berland, *Culture and Conduct in the Novels of Henry James* , (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 11.

I want to show that together Olive's extreme feminism and Basil's "reactionary masculinism"[11] evoke a society where basic cultural values are shaken and where the fundamental roles of man and woman are rapidly changing. James indicates clearly his personal viewpoint on those, like Ransom, who want to keep women from achieving their goals when he writes in 1868: "It seems to us supremely absurd to stand up in high places and endeavor, with a long lash and a good deal of bad language, to drive women back into their ancient fold."[12] What he berates in Olive's activities is not her enthusiasm about fighting for women's rights but her extreme paranoia and hatred for men in general and her surrender to the media, which James presents as one of the major contributors to the levelling tendencies within a democracy. Matthias Pardon's journalism and Selah Tarrant's fraudulence embody the debasement of discrimination, taste, and literacy. Olive's alliance with "cranks and racketeers" to promote the women's movement goes against her fundamental rectitude and refinement.

In his analysis of *The Bostonians* , Peter Buitenhuis argues that "James obviously feels that American women have usurped men's roles so far as to make Ransom's mission practically hopeless"[13] ; he overlooks James's animadversion to both Olive and Basil. In James's portrayal, Olive is obsessed with trying to obliterate the differences between the sexes, her desire to dominate, and keep Verena a prisoner of her will; Basil is egotistical in his fight to preserve the old system and to appropriate and to dominate Verena in the end.

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[11] Tony Tanner, "*The Bostonians* and the Human Voice," *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 156.

[12] Quoted in Tony Tanner, "*The Bostonians* and the Huamn Voice," p. 168.

[13] Peter Buitenhuis, *The Grasping Imagination* , (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 148.

While it is true that Ransom may carry some of James's conservative views, he is too reactionary and too provincial to be spared criticism. His wish is "to drive women back into the ancient fold," and not to accommodate inevitable changes of the roles of the sexes. He longs for public life, but he denies Verena that which he wants to achieve.

In order to trace the development of the various aspects of mass culture, I chose *The Bostonians* and *Herzog* because of their similar subject matter. Both novels deal with essentially the same society although in two different periods of time: the breakdown of family values, "the decline of the sentiment of sex," the massive influence of the mass media, the growing cultural authority of the mass man, problems which James raises in his novel to illustrate the levelling-down in American democracy, are Bellow's central concerns in *Herzog* . Both authors believe that the values they grew up with are disintegrating partly because of the dissolution of family unity, a dissolution which is an outcome of the drastic changes affecting modern society. Both James and Bellow use the conflict between men and women as the starting point to assess a society where everything else is put into question. In addition, as a result of this fundamental conflict, custom and tradition, two main components of culture, are no longer effectively transmitted to future generations. Moreover, most of the cultural values are disrupted because of the mechanization of the age. Both authors see the mass media, especially journalism, as the most powerful and destructive influence on public opinion. And because the mass media is devoid of standards of judgment, it contributes largely to the growth of mass culture. Hence James's and Bellow's directly criticize what Bellow refers to as "Philistine intellectuals" whose purpose is not to educate and transmit knowledge, and penetrate the veiled reality and expose it to their readers, but whose aim is egotistical.

Matthias Pardon represents the beginning of the portrayal of this category of public figures who use the media to advance their careers. Valentine Gearsbach in *Herzog* , Lionel Feffer in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* , and especially Dewey Spangler in *The Deans' December* contribute to the degeneration of American cultural life by manipulating public opinion in order to acquire money and fame.

What I intend to show is that what James perceives as the beginning of a crisis in the United States in the 1880s has shaped itself in what Bellow describes as "the Great Noise."

> By noise I mean not simply the noise of technology, the noise of money or advertising and promotion, the noise of the media, the noise miseduaction, but the terrible excitement and distraction generated by the crises of modern life.[14]

While the chaos of mass culture manifests itself in almost everything from urban violence to "sexual profligacy" to the cultural triumph of the media to the rise of the mass man, some aspects of the phenomenon are more pronounced than others in each novel. In *Herzog* , the emphasis is on the breakdown of the Jewish patriarchal system, and the problems which accompany the changes in man and woman's roles in society. Moses derives his fundamental beliefs, standards of judgment and unique identity from his Jewish heritage. However, he contributes to the disintegration of family unity when he abandons his son Marco and his first wife Daisy in order to fulfill his egotistical fantasies. The Jewish traditions which allow his parents a strong sense of identity and solidarity when they emigrated to the United States lose their relevance to Moses. His Jewish heritage does not present him with the best examples to emulate in his relations with women. Moses is fascinated by the determination and independence of modern women, yet he expects them to act as his traditional Jewish mother.

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[14] Saul Bellow, "Starting Out in Chicago," *The American Scholar* 44 (1974), p. 77.

While in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* the dissolution of the Jewish patriarchal system and the breakdown of family unity are still vital concerns, the emphasis is on what "Mr. Minutely-Observant Artur Sammler"[15] describes as "the sexual madness" which overwhelms the Western world (p. 63). Since family fails to provide protection from the uncontrollable changes that sweep modern society, and since the necessary human connection becomes difficult to establish, alienated urban inhabitants, like Angela Gruner, resort to sexual activities as a way out. However, this obsession with sex only deepens the sense of alienation, rootlessness, and malaise; it emphasizes pleasure and excitement at the expense of love and intimacy.

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[15] Saul Bellow, *Mr Sammler's Planet*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 15.

While many aspects of mass culture which are depicted in *Herzog* and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* are still pursued in *The Dean's December* , the stress in this latter work is on the triumph of the media. I will show that in juxtaposing Dewey Spangler's overwhelming fame and success in controlling public opinions with Corde's defeat with the publication of his *Harper's* articles, Bellow accentuates the increasing cultural authority of mass media. One can trace the development of such juxtaposition between genuine and false communication in James's as well as in Bellow's novels. In the *Bostonians* Ransom's difficulty in publishing his articles is set against Pardon's successful journalism. Herzog's letters as a means of genuine communication are not as effective as Gersbach's radio and television programs. The fact that Mr Sammler enjoys reading only thirteenth century writers like Meister Eckhart, Suso, Tauler, and the Bible in their original languages shows that the knowledge Sammler strives for is inaccessible to a modern reader like Lionel Feffer, who uses his university post to strike deals and make money. As a "Philistine intellectual," Spangler uses his expertise in literature to obfuscate reality by presenting abstractions which deny the imagination its need for genuine communication. "Communication," Bellow says in a recent interview, "is what is notably most absent in modern life, despite the fact that people are ostensibly informed".[16]

I want to show that the disintegration foreseen in *The Bostonians* is now in full swing, and that the symbolic victory that

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[16] Melvyn Bragg, "In Conversation with Melvyn Bragg, Saul Bellow Talks About his New Novel, and About the Women in Eastern Europe," *London Review of Books* , (6-19 May, 1982), p. 22.

James could afford to allow Basil Ransom, a defender of culture, when he "rescues" Verena from publicity and advertisement of the Boston Music Hall is impossible to achieve in Bellow's time. Moses Herzog, Arthur Sammler and Albert Corde are concerned and committed to culture, but their course of action varies. While Herzog, who is too involved in his personal entanglements, fails to provide an alternative for the mass man, and Sammler, who is devoted to culture, is too withdrawn from society to have any substantial effect, Corde strives to get involved and make a difference. His *Harper* 's articles express clearly his stand on culture, but his defeat in the end overrides James's view that

> the very tradition of sensibility would perish if left to [the] care[of monstrous masses]. It has here and there to be rescued, to be saved by independent, intelligent zeal; which type of effort, however, to avail, has to fly in the face of the condition.[17]

Both James and Bellow advocate a qualified minority as a safeguard to preserve culture from the pressure of democracy. But Albert Corde in *The Dean's December* demonstrates that the "intelligent zeal" not only suffers greatly because of the colossal reality of his undiscriminating milieu but is also overpowered by the taxing authority of the "Philistine intellectual," whose aim is merely egotistical.

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[17] Henry James, "Preface" *The Altar of the Dead*, (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1937), VIII.

II. *The Europeans* : A Portrayal of New England's Established Culture

In *The Europeans* , Henry James presents various relationships which are designed to give insight into American culture. The two central relationships of the novel are opposed in their development and outcome because the people involved are of dramatically different temperaments. Whereas Baroness Münster and Robert Acton fail to find some common ground for their short friendship, Felix Young and Gertrude Wentworth successfully escape the limits of their respective cultural environments and unite in matrimony. Through his portrayal of these and other relationships, James offers an equivocal critique of American society. On the one hand, he sets the novel in a community based on a solid system of values which stems from democratic and Puritan heritages and which guarantees the members of the community moral stability, psychic equilibrium and a true sense of individualism. On the other hand, James presents the same social order with an undertone of ironic skepticism for repressing its members and restricting their emotional development. As a result, they lack the sort of sophistication that encourages imagination, which is necessary for discrimination, both important Jamesian requirements for cultural maturity.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate first that through the Baroness and Acton's inability to achieve a fulfilling togetherness, James underlines the limitations of Acton's New England sensibility, on the one hand, and the Baroness's unsound value system, on the

James underlines the limitations of Acton's New England sensibility, on the one hand, and the Baroness's unsound value system, on the other hand. James illustrates his assessment of the two characters by drawing attention to their attitude toward art which does not exclude the use of art for concealment, dissembling and theatricality. Secondly, I will show that, in presenting Felix and Gertrude's successful union, James accentuates, through Gertrude's portrayal, some positive characteristics of American democracy that allow for individualism and freedom of choice. It will be noted that in introducing Felix to the New England scene, James juxtaposes Felix's refined aesthetic sensibility with New England's simplicity, in ways that explore the tediousness of that simplicity. And finally I will argue that, in spite of his awareness of what is missing in American culture, James emphasizes and celebrates some positive traits of American democracy, such as the possibility for individuals to express themselves directly and still have a family unity and to function as integral parts of the community.To provide an assessment of the quality of life in the pre-Civil War period, James introduces to the American scene two European guests; Baroness Münster and Felix Young are on a visit to their American relatives; the two Europeans offer dissimilar perspectives on American society.

Baroness Münster's relationship with Robert Acton reveals as much about her character as about the state of culture in New England before the Civil War. James underlines the Baroness's sophistication in order to expose what is revealed as Acton's only apparent worldliness and to bring forward New England's "primitive" condition. With her foreign airs and social graces, Baroness Münster is clearly incongruous with New England's sense of simplicity. Her highly ornamented costumes, her fastidiousness and refinement bespeak her imposing personality; even the multiplicity of her name, Eugenia Camilla-Dolores, Baroness Münster and wife of the Prince of Silberstadt-Schreckenstein, indicates the many-sidedness of her character and sets her apart from the straightforwardness of her American cousins and their Arcadian, serenely preserved pastoral environment. As the story unfolds, their simplicity is conspicuously juxtaposed to the duplicity of her behavior: "Nothing that the Baroness said was wholly untrue. It is fair to add, perhaps, that nothing that she said was wholly true" (p. 78). Because of the ambiguous implications of her actions, the Baroness's multi-faceted personality becomes an object of suspicion among the unsophisticated children of Puritans. Her complexity of character, use of a different language, and occasionally devious behavior never make it easy for her cousins to understand her or take her as one of them. Even Gertrude, who intuitively understands her, is unable to fathom the complexity of the Baroness' personality. Intimidated by her elaborate style and at a loss as to how to relate to her, they are in no position to comprehend her many nuances. "There were several ways of understanding her: there was what she said, and there was what she meant, and there was something between the two, that was neither" (p. 156). Indeed, she keeps up a barrier, but James is careful to let the reader inside the barrier; despite her flaws, we can see her as an accomplished woman of undoubted taste, elegance, and fine manners.

While the Wentworths perceive reality strictly from a moral perspective, Eugenia, often ignoring their entrenched sense of ethics, interprets their reality from the vantage point of her materialistic interests. Like Felix, she has come to the New World to seek her fortune. She admits that she is ambitious. She is aware of the insecurity of her "morganatic" marriage, and she insists that her American relatives should be rich. She, in fact, remarks to her brother early in the novel: "'Do you suppose if I had not known they were rich I would ever have come?'" (p. 40). In her endeavor to marry into wealth, Eugenia does not shun deviousness.

> . . . She had come four thousand miles to seek her fortune; and it is not to be supposed that after this great effort she could neglect any apparent aid to advancement. . . she had primarily detected such an aid to advancement in the person of Robert Acton, but . . . she had afterwards remembered that a prudent archer has always a second bowstring (p. 132).

The second bowstring is her cousin Clifford Wentworth, who is much younger and virtually engaged to Lizzie Acton. In her calculating scheme she even considers Clifford, whom she knows to be crude.

She easily impresses the Wentworths with her charm, amiability, and sophistication. She is treated with high distinction: "The sense, indeed, that the good people about her had, as regards her remarkable self, no standard of comparison at all, gave her a feeling of almost illimitable power" (p. 82). Even so, she fails to appreciate their qualities. Ironically, her attempt to adjust herself to her new environment only reinforces her difference. Her elaborate manners and stylish comportment are too provocative for a group of plain and unassuming people to whom sincerity and truth are vital yardsticks for accepted behavior. She carries her European world with her. She has "brought with her to the New World a copious provision of the element of costume" (p. 79). The cottage Mr. Wentworth offers her could have served as a common ground for the two cultures to come into harmony, but she chooses instead to decorate it exclusively in a European style. She hangs up

> *portières* in the doorways, [places] wax candles. . . in unexpected situations. . . . There were Indian shawls suspended, curtain-wise in the parlour door, and curious fabrics. . . . There were pink silk blinds in the windows, by which the room was strangely bedimmed; and along the chimneypiece was disposed a remarkable band of velvet, covered with coarse, dirty-looking lace (p. 79).

The "dirty-looking lace" delicately hints at the Baroness's dubious morality.

It is not surprising then that she overlooks her cousins' admirable attributes. She is aware of the Wentworths' "wonderfully peaceful and unspotted" household, which is "pervaded by a sort of dove-coloured freshness" and which evokes "quietude and benevolence" (p. 77). But she is more skeptical than Felix about the nature of the Wentworths' company, especially when Felix expresses his enthusiasm about his cousins:

> 'As for thinking them the best company in the world,' said the Baroness, 'that is another thing; and as for

> wishing to live *porte à porte* with them, I should as soon think of wishing myself back in the convent again, to wear a bombazine apron and sleep in a dormitory' (p. 77).

Not only is the Baroness deeply rooted in European culture and traditions, but her perception has become trained to the sophisticated at the expense of the modest. As Felix correctly points out, "She's even more of a European than I; here . . . she's a picture out of her setting" (p. 112). Her acute criticism of her cousins is evidence of her unbending attitude toward their idiosyncrasies.

In Eugenia's failure to find a proper partner in the United States, James accentuates the "angular conditions of New England life" (p. 144), draws attention to her unsound morality and warns against any undiscriminating and total acceptance of Europe. "It's a complex fate," James wrote to Charles Elliot Norton, "being an American, and one of the responsibilities it entails is fighting against a superstitious valuation of Europe."[1]

In his interpretation of *The Europeans* , Richard Poirier puts too much emphasis on the Baroness. He argues that in her views, Eugenia is close to James's perspective.[2] However, to focus on or undermine the Baroness too much is to ignore Robert Acton's role in the novel and by extension the "dialectic" perspective from which the European and American values are examined. As Marius Bewley puts it, James "searches. . . for a reality that is poised in suspension among the multiple possibilities that Europe and America offer him, but which is really the property of neither."[3] James's early exposure to European arts and culture enriched his sensibility and permitted him to look at his American heritage from a seasoned perspective. He was conscious that it was a "terrible burden" for an American artist to have to deal with Europe.[4] Indeed, as F. W. Dupee puts it, "past and present, power and innocence, experience and vision, freedom and responsibility, Europe and America--on such antitheses James's mind was nourished."[5] Living in Europe provided James with experiences which proved valuable in his career as a writer. Europe offered him the feeling he came to describe as the "inward romantic principle" (Dupee, p. 67). Europe became the touchstone and salvation for James's personal and artistic inclinations. It provided his refined sensibility with an established culture, tradition, and history, which he saw as fundamentally necessary for a recorder of human consciousness. However, throughout his writings, he maintains a balance of both American and European cultures, holding their values in a dialectic that does not favor one side over the other.

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[1] Leon Edel, ed. *Henry James Letters* Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 274. (Marius Bewley uses this phrase "the complex fate" as the title of his book where he discusses James as an American artist shaped as much by American writers, like Nathaniel Hawthorne, as by Europe[illegible] literature).

[2] Richard Poirier, *The Comic Sense of Henry James: A Study of the Early Novels* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), 123.

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[3] Marius Bewley, *The Eccentric Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), p. 220. (In fact Bewley refers to F. R. Leavis, who was the first to argue in his article "The Novel as Dramatic Poem: *The Europeans*," that James established a symmetry between the European and American values).

[4] In an entry in his *Notebooks* in 1881, James recorded his decision to live abroad: "My choice is the old world, my need, my life. One can't do both--one must choose. No European writer is called upon to assume that terrible burden and it seems hard that I should be. This burden is necessarily greater for an American--for he *must* deal, more or less, even if only by implication, with Europe; whereas no European is obliged to deal in the least with America" (23-24).

[5] F. W. Dupee, *Henry James* (New York: William Sloane, 1951), p. 4.

In exposing Robert Acton's inability to appreciate the complexity of the Baroness' personality and sophistication of tone, James satirizes Acton's inadequacies and underlines the limitations of New England. At the outset, Eugenia's censure of her American relatives excludes Acton, a cousin of the Wentworths. From their first encounter, she "instantly felt that he was, intrinsically, the most important person present" (p. 68). Acton too is conscious of Eugenia's charming personality, polite manners and refined imagination. He knows that he is "the ornament of his circle" (p. 98). Consequently, he feels that "he deserve[s] to enjoy a monopoly of her, for he [is] certainly the person who ha[s] most adequately gauged her capacity for social intercourse" (p. 101). Nevertheless, although Acton is also considered by the Wentworths to be "the ornament of his circle" and is able to impress her, he is true to his New England milieu, which is morally strong but lacking in aesthetic sophistication.

In his circle Acton is considered "the man of the world" (p. 98). He has made a lucrative trip to China from which he has brought back a large collection of art objects. The splendor and opulence of his house do not escape Baroness Münster's lively perception:

> It was a much more modern dwelling than Mr. Wentworth's and was more redundantly upholstered and expensively ornamented. The Baroness perceived that her entertainer had analyzed material comfort to a sufficiently fine point. And then he possessed the most delightful *chinoiseries* --trophies of his sojourn in the

> Celestial Empire: pagodas of ebony and cabinets of ivory; sculptured monsters, grinning and leering on chimney-pieces, in front of beautifully-figured hand-screens; porcelain dinner-sets, gleaming behind the glass doors of mahogany buffets; large screens, in corners, covered with tense silk and embroidered with mandarins and dragons (p. 107).

To the ambitious Eugenia, the house stands for the fortune she comes to seek in America: "'*Comme c'est bien* !' she said to herself; such a large, solid, irreproachable basis of existence the place seemed to her to indicate" (p. 168).

Yet, in spite of Acton's claim that he is well travelled and a "man of the world," he is not as cultivated as he pretends. His seeming worldliness masks "the angular conditions" of his environment (p. 144). His house may contain many art objects, but the real color of his New England sensibility still shows through. He "talked a great deal about his *chinoiseries*; he knew a good deal about porcelain and bric-à-brac" (p. 108). "[B]ut it must be confessed, in the fierce light of contemporary criticism, that his walls were adorned with several rather abortive masterpieces" (p.99). Furthermore, Acton's house, James comments, "had a mixture of the homely and the liberal, and though it was almost a museum, the large, little-used rooms were as fresh and clean as a well-kept dairy" (pp. 107-08).

Indeed, the bric-à-brac and *chinoiseries* are simply meant to conceal his inner deficiencies. "He knew that he was by no means so much of a man of the world as he was supposed to be in local circles; but it must be added that he knew also that his natural shrewdness had a reach of which he had never quite given local circles the measure" (p. 99). He uses his "natural shrewdness" to disguise his personal limitations:

> [Acton] was lounging a little in his chair. He was, however, not lounging; and when he was he was not quite so relaxed as he pretended. To a certain extent, he sought refuge from shyness in this appearance of relaxation; and, like many persons in the same circumstances, he somewhat exaggerated *the appearance*. Beyond this, the air of being much at ease was a cover for vigilant observation (My italics, p. 100).

Insofar as Acton is merely a collector of expensive objects, he does not present an equal partner to Eugenia. As a result, he never really understands nor accepts her different and sophisticated approach to life. His narrow scope of imagination does not enable him to take the Baroness' complexity as a part of her charming personality. Thus, when he takes her to visit his invalid mother, he catches Eugenia fibbing. In order to please the older lady, Eugenia remarks that her son had talked "immensely of you. Oh, he talks of you as you would like. . . .as such a son *must* talk of such a mother" (p. 109). While Acton takes the lie as a violation of New England's sense of sincerity and decorum, Eugenia sees it merely as a gesture of civility to please and flatter the invalid. F. W. Dupee pinpoints the crux of the situation when he remarks that

> Insofar as Acton abhors the Baroness's fibs he is being true to the New England sincerity; insofar as he makes it the issue in his rejection of her he is seeking excuses for

> avoiding an entanglement which his egoism, his prudence, and his attachment to his mother render embarrassing in any case (p. 104).

Although, until the very end, he admits to himself that "By Jove, how *comme il faut* she is!" (p. 171), Acton settles for a "nice young girl". Like Basil Ransom, the protagonist in *The Bostonians* , Acton can marry only such a type as Verena Tarrant, for he can mold her character to suit his ego. When he thinks of Eugenia as a wife, he does so in shocking military imagery, comparing his single status to "a citadel" lowering the drawbridge, and wishing to keep Eugenia as a prisoner, "a tolerably patient captive" (pp. 138-39).

At the outset, he tries to resist her charming personality by guarding himself against her, but her enchanting impact on him turns into an intellectual response. "From the first she had been personally fascinating; but the fascination now had become intellectual as well. He was constantly pondering her words and motions; they were as interesting as the factors in an algebraic problem" (p. 138). Most important, in trying to do away with the complexity and mystery of her character, he violates her nature. He conducts various experiments to scrutinize her personality. For instance, he closely observes her to see how she will react to Clifford's sudden decision to marry Lizzie Acton:

> The Baroness threw back her head and smiled at her uncle; then turning, with an intenser radiance, to Robert Acton, 'I am certainly very stupid not to have thought of that,' she said. Acton looked down at his boots, as if he thought he had perhaps reached the limits of legitimate

> experimentation, and for a moment Eugenia said nothing more. It had been, in fact, a sharp knock, and she needed to recover herself. This was done, however, promptly enough. 'Where are the young people?' she asked.
>
> 'They are spending the evening with my mother.'
>
> 'Is not the thing very sudden?'
>
> Acton looked up. 'Extremely sudden. There had been a tacit understanding; but within a day or two Clifford appears to have received some mysterious impulse to precipitate the affair.'
>
> 'The impulse,' said the Baroness, 'was the charms of your pretty sister.'
>
> 'But my sister's charms were an old story; he had always known her,' Acton had begun to experiment again.
>
> Here, however, it was evident that the Baroness would not help him. 'Ah, one can't say! Clifford is very young; but he is a nice boy.'
>
> 'He's a likable sort of boy, and he will be a rich man.'
>
> This was Acton's last experiment; Madame Münster turned away (pp. 191-92).

With his various experiments on Eugenia, Acton reminds one of Hawthorne's Ethan Brand. In his persistent endeavor to uncover and intrude upon her private thoughts, he violates the sanctity of her nature.

Acton's intense preoccupation with controlling his surroundings allows him to channel his energy into abstractions so that he does not have to deal with human emotions. As a result of his emotional coldness, his attraction to Eugenia disturbs his self-demeanor. James's acute irony at Acton's inability to feel for the Baroness does not escape the reader's eyes in a passage such as the following: "It was part of his curiosity to know why the deuce so susceptible a man was *not* in love with so charming a woman" (p. 139). He knows that he is not just interested but excited by Eugenia, but he can fancy illicit relationships with her only in distant Newport or Niagara, far from the influence of his mother, who embodies "a presence refined to such delicacy that it had almost resolved itself, with him, simply into the subjective emotion of gratitude" (p. 109).

Acton's travel experiences and accumulated wealth, which distinguish him from his New England circle, have not cultivated in him true knowledge or liberality. On the contrary, his worldliness makes him suspicious, and his collection of rich objects serves only to make him look interesting in Baroness Münster's eyes. His mistrust of Eugenia deepens when, coming back suddenly from Newport, he catches her off guard "educating" Clifford Wentworth. Since Acton is already convinced that "she is a woman who will lie" (p. 171), the incident only deepens the gap between them.

It is ironic that Eugenia, who is capable of fine perception, fails to see Acton's pretense. In their relationship, she is too busy planning how to trick Acton into marrying her to notice that he is striving to bring her lively imagination under the scope of his intellect. Early in their encounter, she genuinely wants to establish with him a relationship which is different from what she had experienced in Europe. She openly lets him know that "'I had a sort of longing to come to those natural relations which I knew I should find here. Over there I had only. . . artificial relations" (p. 102). However, she eventually comes to the realization that Acton is not only incapable of establishing a bond with her, but also lacks honesty, since the only relation he can imagine with a woman of Eugenia's stature is flippant and non-committal. Both inevitably manage to reduce what may have been possible to a mere game, especially as they resort to dissimulation and deceit.

In the final analysis, Acton uses New England ethical values to camouflage his emotional ineptitude. His dislike of Eugenia's fibs and his experimentation to find out her weaknesses and affectations are nothing but pretexts in order not to marry her. Indeed, until the very end, he maintains that "he was in love with her now; he was conscious of that, or he thought he was; and the only question with him was whether he could trust her" (p. 170). The end of the novel provides evidence of his lack of self-confidence and inner strength, since the only person he can marry--and only after his mother's death--is "a particularly nice young girl" (p. 194). Eugenia's defeat indicates that under the conditions of the New England milieu, which are tediously simple and adamantly resistant to foreign influences, her sophistication and elegance prove ineffectual. Through her failure to find an equal partner, James provides a critique not only of Robert Acton's limited approach to life and inability to open up to different opportunities but also a critique of the Baroness's dishonesty and insincerity, which prevent her from achieving a fulfilling experience in her visit to the United States.

Baroness Münster and Robert Acton represent imprisonment by a particular culture. They seem incapable of detaching themselves others. Acton's seeming worldliness does not allow him to fathom Eugenia's European background or understand her complex personality. Likewise, charmed by his materialistic *aisance* , the Baroness does not take into consideration his New England sensibility. With her dissimulation, she violates the rigid Puritanical sense of morality.

While Baroness Münster and Robert Acton fail to bridge the differences of their respective cultures, Felix' and Gertrude's relevant relationship is crucial to the successful amalgamation of America and Europe. In a letter to William Dean Howells, in which James outlines the plot of *The Europeans,* James describes Felix as "a genial charming youth of a Bohemian pattern" who by "his gayety (sic) and sweet audacity" will smooth the "ascetic" and "mouldering" ways of his Puritan relatives. Felix is portrayed as a happy young man with "a charming nature" (p. 37). "His faculty of enjoyment was so large, so unconsciously eager, that it may be said of it that it had a permanent advance upon embarrassment and sorrow. His sentient nature was intrinsically joyous" (p. 79). Consequently, he is eager to enjoy his experience of the New World as much as he can. As his name indicates--in Latin, Felix means "fortunate" or "happy"--Felix Young possesses both a youthful and a fortunate outlook on life.

> Never was a nature more perfectly fortunate. It was not a restless, apprehensive, ambitious spirit, running a race with the tyranny of fate, but a temper so unsuspicious as to put adversity off guard, dodging and evading her with the easy, natural motion of a wind-shifted flower. Felix extracted entertainment from all things, and all his

> extracted entertainment from all things, and all his faculties--his imagination, his intelligence, his affections, his senses--had a hand in the game (pp. 79-80).

The most flattering compliment comes from his grave uncle, who envies Felix's *joie de vivre* and warmth. James records Mr. Wentworth's approving, but still troubled perception of his nephew:

> He was so bright and handsome and talkative that it was impossible not to think well of him; and yet it seemed as if there were something almost impudent, almost vicious--or as if there ought to be--in a young man at once so joyous and so positive. It was to be observed that while Felix was not at all serious there was somehow more of him--he had more weight and volume and resonance--than a number of young men who were distinctly serious (p. 87).

Despite his likable character, artistic sensitivity and European experience, Felix lacks New England's aspirations toward moral purity. "Not at all serious," he displays, as Edwin Bowden suggests, a sort of "flippant disregard" for many of the minor but established codes of morality.[6] He does not hesitate to earn money "by knocking off a flattering portrait of his host or hostess" (p. 94). He is repeatedly referred to as a frivolous young man. Moreover, not strongly rooted in any particular tradition, he does not possess the stability his cousins are accustomed to. He says of himself and his sister, "I am afraid you will think we are little better than vagabonds. I have lived anywhere--everywhere" (p. 55). Although Felix has lived in every city in Europe, he does not belong to any particular place. Without parents and without a national identity, Felix is totally rootless.

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[6] Edwin T. Bowden, *The Themes of Henry James* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 50.

Nevertheless, he faces life and its complexity with a smile, though once this smile is strangely depicted as a "grimace" (p. 52). The narrator comments that, "You would have said that American civilization expressed itself to his sense in a tissue of capital jokes" (p. 41). However, his experience in New England does permit him to achieve a richness of perspective. Felix possesses artistic talent and an ability to be spontaneous, but he needs Gertrude's strong sense of morality to develop into a complete person. Marriage entails duty and responsibility, and in marrying Gertrude, who has a strong character, Felix will combine his genuine merriment with Gertrude's Puritan-influenced outlook on life.

Whereas Felix has an aesthetic rather than a moral approach to life, Gertrude is brought up to see life from a strictly moral viewpoint. She is restless and unsatisfied with her style of living, but she does not know how to change it. She longs for a more enriching life, but until she meets Felix, she is not aware of what is lacking. Indeed, as Bewley puts it, Gertrude is one of James's characters who constitute

> the record of men and women, [who are] bleakly deprived through their Puritan, democratic, and American traditions of much that constitutes life for the European artist, searching for means to satisfy their

> spiritual and emotional needs without sacrificing the good that they already possess, and which Europe cannot provide.[7]

Gertrude never really fits into the New England family system. Felix, with his artistic experience, sharp intelligence, and European heritage, is aware from the very beginning that Gertrude is different from her own people. Gertrude has been the source of worries to her family, who, as Felix remarks, "take things hard" (p. 61). Her "peculiarities" of temper pose a major concern for her father and sister. They thus call upon Mr. Brand's authority to train and correct her. However, she constantly resists his influence. For example, she puzzles him when she gives the blueness of the sky as her reason for breaking the Sabbath (p. 50). With Felix's arrival, she knows beyond question that she will never marry the minister. James underlines Gertrude's growing awareness of the limitations of her Puritan heritage; however, she is only partly detached from her background and partly open to Felix's flexibility. In her exchange with Mr. Brand, she shows the beginning of the need to be herself:

> 'I am trying for once to be natural! cried Gertrude passionately.
>
> 'I have been pretending, all my life; I have been dishonest; it is you that have made me so!' Mr. Brand stood gazing at her, and she went on, 'Why shouldn't I be frivolous, if I want? One has a right to be frivolous, if it's one's nature. No, I don't care for the great questions. I

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[7] Marius Bewley, *The Eccentric Design* . 239.

> care for pleasure--for amusement. Perhaps I am fond of wicked things; it is very possible!' (p. 128)

Indeed, we are not meant to take Gertrude's final remark at face value, since it does not reveal the truth about her character. Because she has been provoked by Mr. Brand, she says what she normally would *not* , but in defying the Reverend, an authority figure, she conveys a strength of character. She continues to reflect her Puritan heritage in her underlying concern with personal honesty.

Moreover, Gertrude's imagination enables her to appreciate her cousins' aesthetic pursuits and aspirations. Even though she does not fully understand Eugenia's complex personality, she is at least alert to the many nuances that characterize her speech. For instance, unlike Robert Acton, who is offended by Eugenia's polite fib, and unlike Charlotte, who is intimidated by the Baroness's elaborate style, Gertrude is flattered by Eugenia's insincere compliment :

> It was not the compliment that pleased her; she did not believe it; she thought herself very plain. She could hardly have told you the source of her satisfaction; it came from something in the way the Baroness spoke, and it was not diminished--it was rather deepened, oddly enough--by the young girl's disbelief (p. 64).

She is so charmed by "the mysterious impressiveness of Eugenia's personality" (p. 189) that she would like to use her as a model. As she watched Baroness Münster entertaining two visitors from Boston who did not interest Eugenia, "Gertrude was absorbed in the study of the problem how, in spite of her indifference and her absent attention, she managed to have such a charming manner. That was the manner Gertrude would like to have; she determined to cultivate it" (p. 173).

Dupee contends that Gertrude's union with Felix resolves a potentially disastrous situation in the Wentworth household (p. 102). It is true that Gertrude vaguely knows that something is amiss in her environment, and she needs only to be exposed to wider experiences to be able to articulate and comprehend the crux of the situation. In an exchange with Felix, she tries to express her dissatisfaction with her family: "Gertrude was silent for a moment; and then, 'There must be a thousand different ways of being dreary,' she said; 'and sometimes I think we make use of them all" (p. 91). In response, Felix shows her his way of looking at life; Gertrude says:

> . . .'I don't think it's what one does or doesn't do that promotes enjoyment . . . It is the general way of looking at life.' They look at it as a discipline - that is what they do here. I have often been told that.'
>
> 'Well, that's very good. But there is another way,' added Felix smiling: 'to look at it as an opportunity' (p. 93).

In other words, Felix provides her with the necessary education that enables her to realize what is lacking in her personality. Gertrude is repeatedly described as someone with a vivid imagination which sets her apart from her milieu and allows her to be receptive. James confirms, however, that Gertrude alone is able to achieve only a qualified sense of the self. Although she is brought up within New England's established tradition, she lacks insight into herself. The implication is that she needs Felix's European experience and agreeable deportment in order to achieve maturity.

By agreeing to marry Felix and accompany him to Europe, Gertrude is true to her rebellious nature. In effect, she longs to expand her horizon beyond the boundaries of New England. In breaking away from the strictness of her upbringing, Gertrude exhibits a laudable longing for aesthetic and cultural satisfaction, for a complete life. Thus, her union with Felix indicates that European and American values can and do supplement each other.

Through Gertrude's relationship with her family and Mr. Brand, James offers a critique of the children of the Puritans for their shortcomings. In their endeavor to change Gertrude's nature and control her comportment, they display their preoccupation with abstract moral values which they are unable to validate in terms of human experience (Bewley, 224). They are slow to tolerate differences of conduct among people since they are accustomed to live by rigid rules. For example, Mr. Brand considers it his duty and responsibility to tone down Gertrude's "difficult temperament." He is so absorbed with doing the right thing and setting the best example for his congregation that he overlooks her feelings and wishes. "The Puritan preoccupation with rigid rules of conduct," as Tony Tanner succinctly argues, "may testify not to great passions manfully resisted, but simply to an absence of passion, and . . . 'the great standard of morality' so often invoked may only be a rationalization for a great emotional anaesthesia."[8] In his dealing with Gertrude, Mr. Brand accentuates "the great standard of morality," while ignoring her own particular emotions and aspirations. Mr. Brand clearly epitomizes the abstract rigidity of Puritan repressiveness.

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[8] Tony Tanner, "Introduction," Henry James's *The Europeans* . (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), 25.

Like Mr. Brand, Mr. Wentworth considers his daughter's well-being without taking into account her personal happiness; he is merely concerned with the moral and ethical implications of choosing Felix over Mr. Brand. Mr. Wentworth and Charlotte are uncertain about Gertrude's stability of character when Felix expresses his wish to marry her:

> 'It is better you should be present,' said Mr. Wentworth. 'We are discussing your future.'
>
> 'Why discuss it?' asked Gertrude. 'Leave it to me.'
>
> 'That is, to me!' cried Felix.
>
> 'I leave it, in the last resort, to a greater wisdom than ours,' said the old man.
>
> Felix rubbed his forehead gently. 'But *en attendant* the last resort, your father lacks confidence,' he said to Gertrude.
>
> 'Haven't you confidence in Felix?' Gertrude was frowning; there was something about her that her father and Charlotte had never seen. Charlotte got up and came to her, as if to put her arm round her; but suddenly, she seemed afraid to touch her.
>
> Mr. Wentworth, however, was not afraid. 'I have had more confidence in Felix than in you,' he said.
>
> 'Yes, you have never had confidence in me--never, never! I don't know why.'
>
> 'Oh, sister, sister!' murmured Charlotte.

> 'You have always needed advice,' Mr. Wentworth declared. 'You have had a difficult temperament.'
>
> 'Why do you call it difficult? It might have been easy, if you had allowed it. You wouldn't let me be natural. I don't know what you wanted to make of me. Mr. Brand was the worst' (pp. 183-84).

In putting too much emphasis on conformity, the New Englanders manage to alienate Gertrude so much that she dares to go against them. The Wentworths are portrayed as a group of serious, "mouldering and ascetic" people. In his first visit to his uncle's house, Felix is struck by their solemn temperament: "They are sober; they are even severe. They are of a pensive cast; they take things hard. I think there is something the matter with them; they have some melancholy memory or some depressing expectation" (pp. 60-61). Their inflexible deportment is best exemplified by their reaction to their cousins' arrival:

> The sudden irruption into the well-ordered consciousness of the Wentworths of an element not allowed for in its scheme of usual obligations, required a readjustment of that sense of responsibility which constituted its principal furniture. To consider an event, crudely and baldly, in the light of the pleasure it might bring them, was an intellectual exercise with which Felix Young's American cousins were almost wholly unacquainted, and which they scarcely supposed to be largely pursued in any section of human society. The arrival of Felix and his sister was a satisfaction, but it was a singularly joyless

> and inelastic satisfaction. It was an extension of duty, of the exercise of the more recondite virtues (p. 71).

To the Wentworths, duty and responsibility are the principal criteria for appropriate and accepted conduct. They are distrustful of anything that resembles pleasure for pleasure's sake.

While Felix and Gertrude manage to transcend the limitations of their respective milieux, Mr. Wentworth and his older daughter Charlotte are too immersed in their social spheres to be able to open up and learn from what is unfamiliar to them. Mr. Wentworth, for example, is suspicious of the foreignness of his European relatives. On their first visit, he warns Gertrude against any possible influence:

> Mr. Wentworth looked up at his daughter, who was standing beside him; he drew her gently forward. 'You must be careful,' he said. 'You must keep watch. Indeed, we must all be careful. This is a great change; we are exposed to peculiar influences. I don't say they are bad; I don't judge them in advance. But they may perhaps make it necessary that we should exercise a great deal of wisdom and self-control. It will be a different tone (p. 75).

The two Europeans can help the reticent Americans break through the barriers which have excluded them from wider and more spacious experiences, but Mr. Wentworth and Charlotte resist any reality that is outside their conditioned perspective.

Because she lacks imagination, Charlotte, like her father, cannot grasp anything foreign. She cannot even begin to fathom the complexity of her foreign cousins, especially that of the Baroness, who speaks a different language. To Gertrude's claim that Eugenia does not necessarily mean what she says, Charlotte replies that "there can surely be no good reason for telling an untruth" (p. 83). Her understanding is limited to Mr. Brand's teaching. The Unitarian minister represents the ultimate truth and authority for her. "Whatever Gertrude did or said, Charlotte always looked at Mr. Brand" (p. 89). Charlotte's feeling and judging are channelled through her New England upbringing. She does not know how to take a compliment, except with a blush: "She had never yet heard her personal appearance alluded to in a loud expressive voice" (p. 64). Moreover, she earnestly believes that "I don't think one should ever try to look pretty" (p. 48). Like her father, she perceives duty as the measure for judgment. She also believes that proper conduct and personal integrity are criteria to appease a disturbed conscience. She is not able to admit even to herself her secret admiration for Mr. Brand. Her conscious self-denial blurs the clarity of her senses. As a result, she is prepared to sacrifice her love for him because she believes he can be a proper guide for the peculiarities of her rebellious sister. Like her father, Charlotte thinks that Gertrude must marry Mr. Brand because she is obliged to him (p. 123).

In portraying Mr. Wentworth's mistrust of foreign influence and Charlotte's narrow imagination, James criticizes some New Englanders who refuse to break away from their provincialism. "What James seeks," as Bewley puts it, "is a state of civilization in which the finest faculties of the individual shall be given the maximum opportunity for development" (Marius Bewley, p. 247). In his portrayal of Mr. Wentworth, Charlotte, and Mr. Brand, James shows their inability to achieve the individual's maximum development because they are too entangled in their prescriptive abstractions.

James underlines New England's extreme simplicity through its general unawareness of art. In suppressing imagination, the finest faculty for aesthetic appreciation, the children of the Puritans do not achieve cultural maturity. Indeed, what distinguishes the Europeans from their American relatives is their exposure to knowledge and their appreciation of art. James suggests that European cultural sophistication stems from an alert sensitivity to the best art. "By means of the art," as Bowden points out, "life is caught, the past is made a part of the present, and continuity and tradition are made tangible" (p. 11). Felix, an itinerant portrait sketcher, though penniless, displays, James implies, an interfusing of art and life. Art lends Felix "a brilliant assurance of manner which was simply the vehicle of his good spirits and his good will" (p. 159) and as he informs Mr. Brand, art gives his impressions "a great freshness, a great keenness" (p. 160). Whereas Felix's appreciation of art influences and benefits his daily interaction and allows him an easy rapprochement with others, the Wentworths' distrust of art becomes an extension of inner inadequacy.

James's trenchant criticism of Americans is thus directed to their indifference to aesthetic values. Gertrude, we are informed, has never seen an artist before (p. 87). However, her vivid imagination predisposes her to appreciate his art. She is attracted to Felix mostly because he is an artist. In contrast, Mr. Brand admits that he does not know anything about art (p.158). He does not dare look at Felix's sketches because what he perceives in them is mere obscenity. "In the shadow, on the darker parts of the wall, he saw the gleam of three or four pictures that looked fantastic and surprising. They seemed to represent naked figures" (p. 160). Art interferes with the way Mr. Brand sees reality. For a solemn and serious man, art evokes a frank and natural approach to life he consciously strives to avoid.

Similarly, Mr. Wentworth lacks any feelings for art. He, in effect, prefers to refer to Felix as "amateur" rather than artist, for he is not even comfortable with the label. When Felix suggests drawing his uncle's head, Mr. Wentworth is extremely defensive and suspicious:

> 'I should like to do your head, sir,' said Felix to his uncle one evening. . . . 'It's an interesting head; it's very mediaeval.'
>
> Mr. Wentworth looked grave; he felt awkwardly, as if all the company had come in and found him standing before the looking glass. 'The Lord made it,' he said. 'I don't think it is for man to make it over again.'
>
> 'Certainly the Lord made it,' replied Felix, laughing, 'and he made it very well. . . . I should like to do you as an old prelate, an old cardinal, or the prior of an order.'
>
> 'A prelate, a cardinal?' murmured Mr. Wentworth. 'Do you refer to the Roman Catholic Priesthood?'
>
> 'I mean an old ecclesiastic who should have led a very pure, abstinent life. . . .

> 'I think sitting for one's portrait is one of the various forms of idleness,' said Mr. Wentworth. 'Their name is legion' (pp. 88-90).

For Mr. Wentworth, art is a betrayal of reality which he prefers to interpret literally. He is too confined by the traditions of his Puritan ancestors to open up to the world of the senses and the world of imagination. But he finally agrees to have his portrait drawn by Felix.

Appreciation of art does not lend Robert Acton a sense of discrimination, which is necessary for cultural maturity. He is not totally indifferent to art, but his attitude to art suggests a New England commercial approach to art. However, the style of his house suggests not so much his aesthetic awareness as his materialistic interests in the arts. An early version of Gilbert Osmond, "a sterile dilettante" in *The Portrait of a Lady* (p. 396), Acton too lacks spontaneity of feeling. He exploits art, putting too much emphasis on its materialistic aspect. As a collector of art, Acton belongs to the type of American businessman James poignantly criticizes in his writing for subordinating aesthetic appreciation to material gain. Art also serves as a mask for Acton, who uses it to cover up his insecurities. Without inner strength and sense of self, he resorts to art to control his surroundings and impress others, especially the Baroness.

While Acton uses art to cover up his New England sensibility, the Baroness uses art to conceal her true feelings. Despite her refined sensibility and aesthetic sophistication, she is satirized because of a "defect of fine perception". From her first appearance in the novel, Baroness Münster is presented as a "brilliant performer" constantly preoccupied with appearance. Looking at the mirror,

> she paused for a moment, gave a pinch to her waist with her two hands, or raised these members--they were very plump and pretty--to the multifold braids of her hair, with a movement half-caressing, half-corrective. An attentive observer might have fancied that during these periods of desultory self-inspection her face forgot its melancholy (pp. 33-34).

Ironically, her performance in the opening chapter is wasted on Felix, who is too absorbed in his sketching. In the course of the novel, even the Wentworths become aware of her theatricality, which makes them even more uneasy in her presence. When they first met her, "[t]heir attitude seemed to imply that she was a kind of conversational mountebank, attired, intellectually, in gauze and spangles" (p. 60). Because the Baroness is always performing, she does not distinguish between her real and artificial selves. In her relationships, she lacks spontaneity; she is incapable of establishing a bond with others because she envelops herself in a veil of theatrical artificiality. Her relationship with Acton is suggestively described in images from the theater. Summoned to a sick friend in Newport, Acton "felt as if he had been called away from the theater during the progress of a remarkably interesting drama. The curtain was up all the time, and he was losing the fourth act which would be essential to a just appreciation of the fifth" (p. 139). However, as she prepares to leave the United States, Baroness Münster realizes the irrelevancy of her costumes, symbols of her theatricality. "'*Bonté divine*, what rubbish! I feel like a strolling actress; these are my 'properties'"(p. 192). Despite Felix's reassurance that she performs her part "with great applause," we know how painfully she feels her defeat.

Art can make for a delicacy of perception and allow for "discriminating civility" (p. 95). For the Baroness and Acton, however, it does not serve as an authentic form of communication. While the Baroness' attitude towards art includes dissembling and theatricality, Acton's mercantile and calculating approach imposes a crassly materialistic side to the arts; this commercial attitude toward art repulses James in American society. Both Eugenia's and Robert's attitudes towards art extend to their personal interactions. In fact, they are so immersed in the artifice and falsity of art that they are unable to be genuine in their emotions.

The condition of the arts reflects the kind of culture they originate from. The Baroness is not lacking in refinement and cultural maturity to appreciate art, but her theatricality is a part of her sophistication, which she probably acquires as a way to fit in as a wife of the Prince of Silberstadt-Schreckenstein. However, while she is capable of discriminating "fine differences", she lacks the spontaneity of feelings, which is necessary to enjoy art. Acton's attitude, however, is not as complex. Art, for him, is a commodity which has little effect on his sensibility and "no relation with anything beyond its immediate surroundings" (Bowden, p. 12).

Although James accentuates the Wentworths' indifference to art, simplicity of experience, and distrust of any foreignness, he does not obliterate their virtues. He puts a kind of pastoral emphasis on the democratic and Puritan values which still define the American character before the Civil War, and which become, as we shall see in *The Bostonians* , blurry and ineffective after the Civil War. He holds in balance their shortcomings and their good qualities as the novel unfolds. Upon his first call on his American relatives, Felix is able to perceive their serene and simple disposition which evokes "the *ton* of the golden age." His walk in the country "among the meadows and woods" (p. 59) leads him to the Wentworths' house, which is located "a good many miles from Boston" (p. 53). This is how he reports to his sister his impressions about the house and its inhabitants:

> There was a gentleman there that made a speech to me about [what he] called a "venerable mansion'; but it looks as if it had been built last night.'
>
> 'Is it handsome--is it elegant?' asked the Baroness.
>
> Felix looked at her a moment, smiling. 'It's very clean! No splendours, no gilding, no troops of servants; rather straight-backed chairs. But you might eat off the floors, and you can sit down on the stairs.'
>
> 'That must be a privilege. And the inhabitants are straight-backed too, of course.'
>
> 'My dear sister,' said Felix, 'the inhabitants are charming.'
>
> 'In what style?'
>
> 'In a style of their own. How shall I describe it? It's primitive; it's patriarchal; it's the *ton* of the golden age.'
>
> 'And have they nothing golden but their *ton*? Are there no symptoms of wealth?'

> 'I should say there was wealth without symptoms. A plain, homely way of life; nothing for show, and very little for--what shall I call it?--for the senses; but a great *aisance*, and a lot of money, out of sight, that comes forward quietly for subscriptions to institutions, for repairing tenements, for paying doctor's bills: perhaps even for portioning daughters. . . .(p. 60).

Despite the light ironic criticism, there is an inseparable quality of virtue that Felix comments on. Just as the barrenness of the house expresses the innocence of its inhabitants, it also shows their modesty. They carry their wealth without ostentation or arrogance. In another passage, Felix is so charmed by the Wentworths' attributes and generosity that he compares them to the people who lived in "the mythological era, when they spread their tables upon the grass, replenished them from cornucopias, and had no particular need of kitchen stoves" (p. 80). The fact that the novel is set mostly in a rural environment and before the Civil War enables James to reconstruct a "golden age" of meadows and orchards with people who possess qualities that belonged to a way of life that prevailed before the Industrial Revolution.

The Wentworths' best qualities are noted not only by Felix, who appears indiscriminately accepting of others and who takes "rose-coloured views" (p. 59) of everything, but also by his sister. The fastidious Baroness Münster, whose delicacy of perception suggests the richness of an established culture, recognizes some of their charming values. She observes that the girls are "perfect ladies; it [is] impossible to be more of a lady than Charlotte Wentworth, in spite of her little village air" (p. 77). Hence, the Wentworths' conscious self-denial and total absence of any ostentatious display of material well-being invite their European guests' admiration. Charlotte's modesty and propriety of deportment result from an education which is embedded in an established culture that advocates positive ethical values in its people.

New England's common value system is presented within the frame of its democratic and Puritan heritage. Through the Baroness' eyes, James sets the novel within the context of these values which define New England's social scene. In addition to the narrow graveyard which dominates the scene from the inn's window, two items interest the Baroness as she gazes through the window. First, she is struck by "a strange vehicle" [9] which keeps appearing every three minutes. And each time, a large number of Bostonians "scramble" abroad this "huge, low omnibus" (p. 34), a recurring symbol of democracy in James's works. In *The Bostonians* , Olive Chancellor, a lady of rectitude and breeding, who "regulate[s] her conduct on lofty principles" (p. 52), insists on taking the street-car not out of economy, but because she wants to fit in with the poor girls who wander about Boston.

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[9] Thomas Wentworth Higginson pointed out some historical inadequacies in James's novel. He wrote in *Literary World* (22 November, 1879): " [James] opens his *The Europeans* by exhibiting horsecars in the streets nearly ten years before their introduction. . . . The family portrayed has access to the 'best society in Boston'; yet the daughter, twenty-three years old, has 'never seen an artist', though the picturesque figure of Allson had just disappeared from the streets, when Cheney, Staigg, and Eastman Johnson might be seen any day, with plenty of others less known. The household is perfectly amazed and overwhelmed by the sight of two foreigners, although there were more cultivated Europeans in Boston thirty years ago than now. . . Mr James's cosmopolitanism is after all limited; to be really cosmopolitan a man must be at home even in his own country." (Quoted in Tony Tanner, "Introduction." 8)

The second thing that attracts the Baroness's attention is a white "tall church spire" (p. 34) that rises high into the "dull, moist snow-fall" (p. 33). Thus, the New England milieu is evoked through its two main components: its democratic and Puritan heritages.[10] The democratic and Puritan values constitute two extremes in the American cultural spectrum. While the fundamental presupposition of democracy is that each individual is entitled to freedom, liberty and equality, Puritan doctrine, on the contrary, advocates strict discipline in religious, social and moral practices. But these heritages are not always in conflict; in *The Bostonians* , Olive Chancellor, who is rooted in the Puritan tradition, strives for the democratic ideals in her fight for women rights.

Nevertheless, *The Europeans* portrays an established community, which while it lacks some of Europe's cultural sophistication, at least possesses a strong system of values that provides psychological equanimity and social tranquility. This sense of moral solidity stems in its essence from Puritan doctrine which, on the one hand, does not encourage aesthetic awareness and sensitivity, but, on the other hand, provides common beliefs and a standard of values that closely bonds the inhabitants within the same community.

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[10] Robert Emmet Long, *Henry James: The Early Novels* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), pp. 69-70.

In *The Europeans* , James depicts the social texture of New England life and accentuates the appealing quality of community life where ethical and moral standards are taken seriously. The antebellum period, the "earlier and simple generation," as he puts it in his study of *Hawthorne* , represents for him a lost age of virtues and peace. The War had darkened the American temperament for James. In *The Europeans* , he was seeking to recapture a more salubrious and tranquil time.

James's awareness of what is lacking in American culture does not overshadow his evaluation of the positive attributes of the democratic social order. Although Eugenia fails to see many positive aspects of American democracy, James stresses his positive assessment of the same social system. In effect, he portrays a sort of real democracy which allows possibilities of true individualism. As we shall see later, *The Bostonians* shows that in mass society, which emerges with the new industrialization and technology, ordinary man is coerced into following the masses; whereas, in *The Europeans*, we see that New England's community encourages its individuals to express themselves. Gertrude's ability to go against her family's and the Reverend's wishes is a case in point of a society where positive democratic values are put into practice. The fact that Gertrude can make her own choices, like not going to church, rejecting Mr. Brand, and marrying Felix, indicates that the democratic system encourages individuality and freedom of expression. In the texture of American society, where personal relations are defined by a solid system of values and where each individual possesses a dignified place in the community, even a Lizzie Acton is given the opportunity to develop a sense of her self.

Unlike the European hierarchical system which cruelly classifies and freely dismisses people who were not born in the "proper" class and of which Baroness Münster herself is a victim, American democracy advocates equality of opportunity for most individuals. In an exchange of views among the Wentworths about how the Baroness is to be accommodated, James offers an affirmative view of democracy:

> 'She will be very comfortable here,' said Charlotte, with something of a housewife's pride. 'She can have the large north-east room. And the French bedstead,' Charlotte added, with a constant sense of the lady's foreignness.
>
> 'She will not like it,' said Gertrude, 'not even if you pin little tidies over the chairs.'
>
> 'Why not, dear?' asked Charlotte, perceiving a touch of irony here, but not resenting it.
>
> Gertrude had left her chair; she was walking about the room; her stiff silk dress, which she had put on in honour of the Baroness, made a sound upon the carpet. 'I don't know,' she replied. 'She will want something more--more private.'
>
> 'If she wants to be private she can stay in her room,' Lizzie Acton remarked.
>
> Gertrude paused in her walk, looking at her. 'That would not be pleasant,' she answered. 'She wants privacy and pleasure together.'

> Robert Acton began to laugh again. 'My dear cousin, what a picture!'
>
> Charlotte had fixed her serious eyes upon her sister; she wondered whence she had suddenly derived these strange notions. Mr. Wentworth also observed his young daughter.
>
> 'I don't know what her manner of life may have been,' he said: 'but she certainly never can have enjoyed a more refined and salubrious home.'
>
> Gertrude stood there looking at them all. 'She is the wife of a Prince,' she said.
>
> 'We are all princes here,' said Mr. Wentworth, 'and I don't know of any palace in this neighbourhood that is to let' (pp. 73-74).

It is easy to infer the streak of irony expressed in the first half of the dialogue, especially at the expense of Charlotte's limited imagination. But Mr. Wentworth's idea that "we are all princes here" leaves the strongest impact on the reader's mind. James, thus, presents an attractive portrait of American democracy, underlining most of its valuable aspects.

Indeed, as F. R. Leavis suggests, James seems to support Felix's commendation of the American social order which allows young men and women opportunities to socialize freely.[11] Felix values the newly-found freedom he is allowed in his relationships, especially with his American cousins. The narrator describes Felix's delight in his open interactions as follows:

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[11] F. R. Leavis, "*The Europeans* : The Novel as Dramatic Poem," *Scrutiny* 15 (1947-48) : 218.

> He had never before found himself in contact so unrestricted with young unmarried ladies. He was extremely fond of the society of ladies, and it was new that it might be enjoyed in just this manner. He had known, fortunately, many virtuous gentlewomen, but it now appeared to him that in his relations with them (especially when they were unmarried) he had been looking at pictures under glass. He perceived at present what a nuisance the glass had been--how it perverted and interfered, how it caught the reflexion (sic) of other objects and kept you walking from side to side (pp. 80-81).

Freedom of interaction between the sexes is not the only aspect of American democracy that appeals to the two Europeans. While Felix enjoys the openness he discovers in his relation with women in New England, the Baroness finds a family. Despite her worldly sophistication, the Baroness herself admits to the Wentworths' appealing qualities. She is genuinely moved by their simplicity and innocence, and for the first time in her life she finds a real home she never had in Europe:

> 'I came to look--to try--to ask,' she said. 'It seems to me I have done well. I am very tired; I want to rest.' There were tears in her eyes. The luminous interior, the gentle, tranquil people, the an overmastering force, and she felt herself yielding to one of the most genuine emotions she

had ever known.' I should like to stay here,' she said. 'Pray take me in' (p. 70)

James stresses the importance of the family unity and its crucial role in the daughters' education. The Wentworth daughters are the center of their father's attention. With the obvious absence of the mother, the family structure is undergoing inevitable changes of the time. However, the father is involved in his daughters' lives. The Wentworths are closely interconnected, in spite of differences in their opinions. In fact, the family's affinity extends to their cousins, the Actons, and Mr. Brand, the minister.

Although many vital elements of European culture are missing in New England society, James portrays a community with moral refinement and social stability which allows its members to live as integral parts. In such an environment, man and woman are still able to form meaningful relationships. The fact that Felix, whose European background enriches his sensibility, can find an appealing partner in Gertrude, who is informed by the democratic and Puritan heritages, provides evidence for the established state of American culture before the Civil War. Although she does not possess Feiix's sophistication and the taste to "discriminate fine differences", Gertrude is capable of bringing to the relationship the seriousness of her Puritan heritage and the freedom which is the essence of American democracy.

But when James sends the couple to Europe, he implies that Europe, and not America, is the appealing place for a fulfilled life. Nevertheless, in his portrayal of the Baroness and Acton' s relationship, James does not completely endorse European cultivation. He draws attention to some of Europe's limitations through the Baroness's misuse of art. Similarly, he provides a critique of New England's shortcomings not only through the Wentworths' and Mr. Brand's indifference to art, dismissal of foreign influence and rigidity in outlook, but also through Robert Acton's literal outlook on life and materialistic approach to art.

The novelist demonstrates that before the Civil War there was a possibility for a stable culture in the United States. This culture with its living traditions allows close relationship between its members. And although it lacks European sophistication, it possesses an "Edenic beatitude"[12] and serenity which the two Europeans, especially the Baroness, have lost. In the next chapter, I will focus on some aspects of the rapid changes in American society, such as the changes in male/female's roles in society, the rise of mass communication and the breakdown of common values, in order to demonstrate that there is a digression from the possibility of a stable culture in *The Europeans* to the rise of mass culture in *The Bostonians* .

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[12] John Fraser, "Reflections on the Organic Community," *The Human World* (15-16 May-August, 1974): 67.

III. Henry James and the Problems of Boston

Although the New England culture presented in *The Europeans* lacks European sophistication, it generally provides its members with moral refinement and psychological stability. James stresses the importance of democratic and Puritan values in the lives of New Englanders, values which allow them to function as integral parts of their community and encourage the expression of their individuality. The novel shows James's awareness of the limitations of the Puritan heritage which can hinder the full development of the finest faculties of the individual; nevertheless, he accentuates the integrity of the same order which provides common values, underlines the importance of family unity, and lends individuals a strong sense of belonging.

The Bostonians , however, which is set after the Civil War, a period of transition in the United States, depicts a society in a state of disorientation. The democratic and Puritan values praised in *The Europeans* are being gradually dismissed by the majority of the characters, who misuse the ideals of democracy and rebel against and refuse to abide by most forms of authority. Whereas in *The Europeans* , the father and the minister, both authority figures, still play significant roles in the community, in *The Bostonians* , the emphasis is on the irrelevance and absence of such figures.

In this chapter, I will argue that through Basil Ransom and Verena Tarrant's relationship, James presents the inevitable conflict that arises when the old and the new come into contact. Ransom fervently struggles to preserve the conservative order, not exclusively out of devotion to culture, but because as a male the hierarchical system privileges him. Verena, whose malleable personality and undisciplined background fail to provide her with individuality, becomes not unwillingly the object of a struggle between Basil's traditional and Olive Chancellor's new ideologies. I will also show that sexual identity and "the sentiment of sex" have become distorted and confused, relationships between men and women have grown strained, as Basil strives to keep women as subservient beings. Olive Chancellor and Verena Tarrant's relationship gives new dimensions to James's treatment of the complex development of human relations. I will then demonstrate that the complexity and intensity of the relationships depicted in the novel evoke James's vision of the nature of American culture. With the rapid growth of industrialization leading to drastic changes, American established culture, depicted in *The Europeans* , now faces serious threats. While New England provides Olive with a sense of belonging, and the South allows Basil a sense of history, Verena Tarrant, a product of mass culture, floats with the currents of her time. I will finally argue that American culture is endangered by the growing cultural authority of the mass man. In *The Bostonians* , James portrays Selah Tarrant and Matthias Pardon as embodiments of mass man. With the alarming growth of the media which speeds the spread of mass culture and with the absence of any strong countervailing force, American culture enters a time of challenge, especially in urban environments.

As a critic of American society, James suggests that modern civilization is increasingly threatening; the main threat is to culture and culture's main enemy is the press, which both creates and appeals to a homogenized public. I will discuss James's depiction of the influence of the media on American society and its appeal especially to the mass man later, but first, in his relationship with Verena, Basil illustrates the alienation of the individual who endeavors to preserve the old social system. He faces his fast changing and undiscriminating milieu alone. When he endeavors to defend his beliefs, Basil encounters numerous obstacles. This is not to imply that Basil is beyond criticism, nor that he emblematizes the kind of qualities James demonstrates in the combination of Felix and Gertrude's best attributes in *The Europeans* . In their union, Felix and Gertrude, as F. R. Leavis sees it, come to represent the "ideal possibility." In *The Bostonians* , there are only traces of the finest qualities which no character alone embodies.

In his media-controlled environment, Basil's struggle involves preventing Verena from delivering her speech in the Boston Music Hall, which provides maximum publicity. This, however, does not mean that Basil objects to publicity; he wants to keep Verena away from the public sphere which he considers open for men only. Unlike the other males in *The Bostonians* , Basil wants to defend his beliefs in the old social order. His isolation is dramatized by the "feminization" of the other males in the book. Most of them--Verena's father, her suitors, and Mr. Farrinder--either side with the women's movement or use it as a way to improve their material condition.

The first man to be juxtaposed with Basil is Mr. Farrinder. Mrs. Farrinder's husband is dwarfed by his wife's strong personality:

> She lectured on temperance and the rights of women; the ends she laboured for were to give the ballot to every woman in the country and to take the flowing bowl from every man. She was held to have a very fine manner, and to embody virtues and the graces of the drawing-room. . . She had a husband, and his name was Amariah (p. 58).

Henry Burrage, one of Verena's admirers, is a foil to Basil in the sense that he, too, has culture, but it is self-cultivation. However, even with his sense of taste and refinement, Henry Burrage lacks independence and maturity. At the outset, he seems to be the right candidate for Verena: handsome, well-mannered, and rich, but as we get to know about his behavior, he proves to be a cold *dilettante*.

> The furthest he had gone as yet was to tell [Verena] that he liked her for the same reason he liked old enamels and old embroideries; and when she said that she didn't see how she resembled such things, he replied that it was because she was so peculiar and so delicate.[1]

Like Robert Acton in *The Europeans* , Henry Burrage lavishes his attention on "objets d'art" rather than on a woman because his mother still has control over his actions. When Olive senses his insecurities, she welcomes the idea of his marrying Verena because she knows that she can easily take his mother's place.

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[1] Henry James, *The Bostonians* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), 58. Hereafter, page numbers will be included in parentheses within the text after the quotation.

Neither Matthias Pardon nor Selah Tarrant cares about women's conditions or their rights. They use the women's movement as they use any other popular movement: to advance themselves and to make money. Like Basil, Pardon and Tarrant are interested in Verena's future, but their concern is not without self-motivation. While Tarrant, fascinated by the newspaper, wishes to use his daughter to fulfill this dream to become a public figure, Pardon, a journalist, wants to exploit the women's movement as a new and exciting topic for his newspapers.

Compared to these men, Basil Ransom is the only one who dares to take a stand. One is meant to admire his audacity and firmness. The reader never loses sight of the immense odds Basil is up against. Nevertheless, his endeavor is egotistical. When he fights to "rescue" Verena from public exploitation, he is not concerned for her well-being; he himself wants to acquire public recognition, but he denies Verena that which he dreams of achieving.

Basil is drawn to Verena because of her unassertive openness. She is a blank sheet, a figure to be shaped, and he is enthusiastic about taking upon himself the task of shaping her. He is drawn to her because of her malleable character; he sees her as different from the other women he is familiar with, like the "little variety actress" (p. 200) he sees in New York. Basil is attracted to Verena's freedom and innocence. Her docility makes it easy for Basil to manipulate her.

Inept as a lawyer and inefficient as a public communicator, Basil is unable to reckon with the feminists' success. The sophisticated and "tastefully abundant life" of his Boston cousin fills him with envy. She "made him feel unhoused and underfed . . .

[although] he was conscious at bottom of a bigger stomach than all the culture of Charles Street could fill" (p. 47). Moreover, in despair he holds New York and its inhabitants responsible for his failure: "He had been diligent, he had been ambitious, but he had not yet been successful . . . . It became much of a question with him whether success in any form was written there; whether for a hungry young Mississippian, without means, without friends. . ., the game of life was to be won in New York" (pp. 196-97). Nevertheless, he believes that he is entitled to take control over Verena's life. James provides his protagonist with tradition and history in order to justify his function, his beliefs and his place in the order of events in the novel. Ransom comes from Mississippi. As a participant and loser in the Civil War, he is almost a refugee in New England. He has experienced the war, which reduced him to poverty: he is "as poor as a young man could look" (p. 36). Lionel Trilling argues that Henry James and D. H. Lawrence believe that "the masculine character" could not be preserved by someone who is materially successful: "the spokesman for masculinity should be able to lay claim to none but personal powers."[2] Ransom fits this role since he has undergone not only the defeat of the war, but also the loss of his family's wealth.

Although the war has stripped him of most of his worldly possessions, Basil comes out of and is formed by a conservative tradition. He, thus, strongly objects to any reform of the traditional values he was brought up to believe in. Like Olive, he is equally offended by the Tarrants' vulgarity and Pardon's propaganda. Like her, he is also aware of the prevailing levity and laxity, hence, his acerbic observations:

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[2] Lionel Trilling, *The Opposing Self* . (New York: The Viking Press, 1950), p. 112.

> [H]e was much addicted to judging his age. He thought it talkative, querulous, hysterical, maudlin, full of ideas, of unhealthy germs, of extravagant, dissipated habits, for which a great reckoning was in store (p. 199).

These disparaging remarks about his age reflect how personally involved Basil is with his heritage. But when Trilling contends that Ransom "experiences his cultural fears in the most personal way possible, translating them into sexual fear, the apprehension of the loss of manhood,"[3] one wonders if Basil's masculinity is so fragile that it cannot withstand a woman's participation in a public sphere.

Ironically, as the novel progresses, Basil's manhood becomes limited to one purpose: his control over Verena. And his sexual fear rests mainly on whether or not he can prevent her from delivering her speech in the Music Hall. In the end, his allegiance is not motivated by his cultural fear but by his egotistical endeavor.

One aspect of cultural maturity, as James argues in *Speech and Manners* , "consists in having to recognize knowledge and competence and authority, accomplishment, experience and 'importance,' greater than one's own" (pp. 77-78). F. R. Leavis raises the same idea when he contends that culture transcends the individual's selfish pursuits; it subordinates the ego to the highest and deepest values:

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[3] Trilling, *The Opposing*. p. 113.

> It is to the culture that transcends the individual as the language he inherits transcends him that we come back; to the culture that has decayed with tradition. The standards maintained in such a tradition. . . constitute a surer taste than any individual can pretend to. And it is not merely a matter of literary taste. The culture in question, which is not, indeed, identical with literary tradition but which will hardly survive it, is a sense of relative value and memory. . . . It lives only in individuals, but individuals can live without it; and where they are without it they do not know what they miss. And the world, troubled as it is, is unaware of what is gone.[4]

Indeed, one aspect of culture and tradition is that the individual's ego is not completely free; it is restrained, trained and corrected by the proper forces of culture. However, James does not seem to see the need for this concept in Basil's education; whereas a significant harmony in a woman's consciousness and sensibility--such as Verena's--has to come through her relationship with a man. Basil Ransom, as long as he has a cultural background--does not have to reckon with any authority or experience greater than his ego; he also does not see the need of learning from his experience with women.

In *The Bostonians* , Basil is a man on whose shoulders, James implies, falls the responsibility for "correcting" and guiding the female--hence, Basil's desire to rescue Verena from the feminist cause. In contrast to Olive and Basil, who have been informed by tradition, Verena continues to be a medium, without an identity. James also suggests that under the circumstances, Basil is the best alternative, for if she is left ungoverned, she will be badly exploited by her father or by an undiscriminating public.

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[4] F. R. Leavis, The Literary Mind," *For Continuity* . (Cambridge: The Minority Press, 1933), p. 64.

However, Ransom's shortcomings need to be considered. James may have used the Southerner to convey some of his own conservative ideas, but he does not spare him from his satire. Basil is depicted as "very provincial" (p. 42) "reactionary," operating from "narrow notions." He regards women as "essentially inferior to men, and infinitely tiresome when they declined to accept the lot which men made for them" (p. 202). He has a "primitive concept of manhood." He views old-fashioned women as the ideal: "[Basil] was addicted with the ladies to the old forms of address and of gallantry; he held that they were delicate, agreeable creatures, whom Providence had placed under the protection of the bearded sex" (p. 202). What he likes in traditional women is their helplessness and resignation. For example, when asked by Olive about the well-being of his mother and sisters, he answers that "there was one happiness they always had--that of having learned not to think about it too much, and to make the best of their circumstances" (p. 255). He feels that a woman's only purpose in life is to make a man, like him, happy (pp. 242-43). He firmly believes that women have "no place in public," and he bluntly tells Verena, that "[m]y plan is to keep you at home and have a better time with you there than ever" (p. 328). In my view, his ego blurs his vision since he fails to realize that to achieve happiness in his relationship with her, Verena should be a complete person, and that state includes fulfillment of her wishes. Basil's notions about women are incongruous even with the reality of his time.

The women's movement which endeavors to give women active roles in society represents a threat to men's authority. The foundation of the patriarchal system which provides Basil with power is shaken as the subjects of men's control fight for their rights. And since there is no example to follow, American society goes through a phase of confusion and destabilization.

Verena draws Basil's attention to the social changes which have influenced the roles of the sexes in family and social situations when she reminds him that women no longer consider marriage their only option; on the contrary, they want to undertake new challenges. She asks the pertinent question:

> 'And those who have got no home (there are millions, you know), what are you going to do with them? You must remember that women marry--are given in marriage--less and less; that isn't their career, as a matter of course, any more. You can't tell them to go and mind their husband and children, when they have no husband and children to mind' (p. 329).

Ransom dodges the question: "Oh, . . . that's a detail." Moreover, when he defiantly abducts Verena from the Music Hall, he is the victim of jealousy and insecurity; he wants to prove to himself that he is the only one entitled to her, ignoring her pledge to others. In effect, he merely answers to his ego. He ignores Olive's plea to let Verena deliver the speech:

> Olive. . . was literally praying to her kinsman. 'Let her appear this once, just this once: not to ruin, not to shame! Haven't you any pity; do you want me to be hooted? It's only for an hour. . .' [Basil replies] 'Why for an hour, when it's all false and damnable? An hour is as bad as ten years! She's mine or she isn't, and if she's mine, she's all mine!' (pp. 426-27)

Basil's actions are not motivated by his dedication to his cultural heritage, and his function in the novel is not to improve the condition of society. His articles were first rejected on grounds that "his doctrines were about three hundred years behind the age" (p. 198). His reactionary views do not take into consideration the social changes of his time. Hence, he wants to exclude women from achieving self-determination. At the outset, he has a strong conviction that "civilization itself would be in danger if it should fall into the power of a herd of vociferating women" (p. 75), and he makes it clear to Verena in particular that he is interested in defending only his own sex from

> the most damnable feminization! . . . The whole generation is womanized; the masculine tone is passing out of the world; it is feminine, a nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age, an age of hollow phrases and false delicacy and exaggerated solicitudes and coddled sensibilities, which, if we don't look out, will usher in the reign of mediocrity, and the feeblest and flattest and the most pretentious that has ever been (p. 327).

Basil's endeavor to preserve the "masculine tone" is carried out by gaining control over Verena. Her tears at the end of the novel, "not the last she was destined to shed," attest to a union "so far from brilliant" (p. 433).

In my view, the complexity of a living culture allows for and encourages the dynamic and healthy growth of its members. Neither Olive Chancellor, nor Basil Ransom represent the ideal attitude. On the one hand, Basil's aim in preventing Verena from delivering her speech in the Boston Music Hall suggests that his allegiance to culture ignores the emancipation of women; he is motivated by "reactionary masculinism" which does not consider women equal to men. On the other, in devoting herself to the feminist cause, Olive's extreme feminism and her undiscriminating drive to gain recognition through the press undermines the validity of her professed ideals of equality and democracy.

James's entries in February 9th, 1882 *Notebooks* suggest that he drew his ideal of a woman and her purpose in life from his mother:

> She was our life, she was the house, she was the keystone of the arch. She held us all together, and without her we are scattered reeds. She was patience, she was exquisite maternity (*Notebooks* , p. 40).

James's eulogy for his mother suggests that she had a significant influence on her children. However, it becomes increasingly clear that James's conception of an ideal woman suggests someone who lives thoroughly for others with no consideration of her own wishes or personal desires:

> When I came back from Europe I was struck with her being worn and shrunken, and now I know that she was very weary. She went about her usual activities but the burden of life had grown heavy for her, and she needed rest. There is something inexpressibly touching to me in the way in which, during these last years, she went from year to year without it. If she could only have lived she should have had it, and it would have been a delight to see her have it. . . . Summer after summer she never left Cambridge--it was impossible that father should leave his own house. The country, the sea, the change of air and scene, were exquisite enjoyment to her; but she bore with the deepest gentleness and patience the constant loss of such opportunities. She passed her nights and her days in that dry, flat, hot, stale and odious Cambridge. . . . It was a perfect mother's life--the life of a perfect wife. To bring her children into the world--to expend herself, for years, for their happiness and welfare--then, when they had reached a full maturity and were absorbed in the world and in their interests--to lay herself down in her ebbing strength and yield up her pure soul to the celestial power that had given her this divine commission. (*Notebooks* , p. 41).

James was extremely grateful that his mother gave up her life for himself, his brothers, and sister, but he does not claim that she completely loved it. This life-long devotion deserves esteem and gratitude, but it certainly ignores what she might really have done had she been given alternatives. It seems to me that James's mother carried on the traditional task that her mother had handed over to her because she did not know anything else. The challenge would be for her to choose to undertake this important role with other options in mind. Her self-denial, a quality she shares with Herzog's mother even though Sarah Herzog is a fictional character, leads both of them to an early death.

James's beliefs stemmed from the pre-Civil War era when New England and particularly Boston had seen a stable and salubrious culture. Thus, bearing James's views about an ideal woman in mind, one can understand the novelist's criticism of and hostility toward the group of Bostonian women who, in pursuing the feminist cause, upset "the divine commission" James feels they are supposed to undertake. None of the females in the novel invites the kind of admiration James wants his mother to inspire in us. Miss Birdseye, Dr. Prance, Mrs. Luna, Miss Chancellor, and Miss Tarrant fail to measure up to James's ideal woman.

But the relationship between Olive Chancellor and Verena Tarrant is what conveys most of James's criticism of New England society. This relationship has created a major critical controversy. While Judith Wilt considers the relationship healthy, Irving Howes thinks that in it Verena is imprisoned. Wilt, in a feminist reading of the novel, describes the relationship as "'a very close and beautiful tie' (chap. 23) which also has to do with success, that 'sunrise-mist of emotion which made danger as rosy as success' (chap. 5) and vice versa."[5] Irving Howe, however, defines Olive as non-active lesbian:

> Olive's lesbianism. . . --partly because it is antipathetic to society, partly because it is suppressed--cuts her off from everyone, except for a time Verena, and renders her incapable of genuine communication in either public or private life.[6]

In his portrayal of this relationship, James indicates that Olive is passionately attached to Verena. For example, on their first interview, even naive Verena remarks that Olive likes her too much (p. 102). In the same interview, Verena

> felt that she was seized, and she gave herself up, only shutting her eyes a little, as we do whenever a person in whom we have perfect confidence proposes, with our assent, to subject us to some sensation (p. 100).

James uses suggestive diction in describing Olive's fascination with Verena, but he does not explicitly specify that the relationship is sexual. Irrespective of the nature of this relationship, "the decline of the sentiment of sex," according to James, is one of the major consequences of a democratic system which seeks to erase all differences among people. Even some of James's contemporaries who were "so unalike as Walt Whitman and Henry Adams, were aware that something had gone wrong with the sexual life of the nation."[7]

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[5] Judith Wilt, "Desperately Seeking Verena: A Resistant Reading of *The Bostonians*," *Feminist Studies* 13:2 (Summer, 1987): 302

[6] Irving Howe, "Introduction," *The Bostonians* . XXIII.

[7] Quoted in Trilling, *The Opposing* , p. 111.

Olive Chancellor is the centre of this sexual ambiguity.What draws her toward Verena is the fact that Verena is "so strange, so different from the girls one usually met. [She] seemed to belong to some queer gipsy-land or transcendental Bohemia. With her bright, vulgar clothes, her salient appearance, she might have been a rope-dancer or a fortune-teller" (p. 101). The relationship between the two women is more intricate than Verena's mind can fathom.

While Verena is a product of this period of transition in American history, Olive comes out of a conservative culture, and she undertakes to revolutionize women's traditional roles. She is a woman of high refinement and profound artistic sensibility, representing the best and most characteristic elements of Boston's old and established traditions:

> Individual and original as Miss Chancellor was universally acknowledged to be, she was yet a typical Bostonian, and as a typical Bostonian she could not fail to belong in some degree to a 'set'. It had been said of her that she was in it but not of it (p. 187).

Olive's sophistication, cultivated taste and appreciation of art do not escape Basil's notice when he pays her his first visit: "[H]e had never felt himself in the presence of so much organized privacy or of so many objects that spoke of habits and tastes" (p. 45). He is so impressed that he vaguely contemplates marrying her. Olive's drawing-room, with its sense of privacy, its photographs and paintings, indicates that it is "Miss Chancellor's practice to cultivate the best."

Yet although well-bred and rooted in a cultured environment, Olive is fanatical in her new beliefs; she "regulate[s] her conduct on lofty principles" (p. 52). James "undermines Olive's doctrine of feminist separation," as Judith Wilt contends, "with the paralyzing corollary of revenge."[8] "Morbid" and fatalistic, Miss Chancellor is fixed in her notions, especially that of "the great male conspiracy" against her sex: "She hated men as a class" (p. 51). This fixedness invites James's wry observation:

> There are women who are unmarried by accident, and others who are unmarried by option; but Olive Chancellor was unmarried by every implication of her being. She was a spinster as Shelley was a lyric poet, or as the month of August is sultry (p. 47).

Her concern for women and their future is a part of her broad interests in social reform: She is taken by the changes of her time, and she wants to be involved in speeding up the changes: "The most secret, the most sacred hope of her nature was that she might some day have such a chance, that she might be a martyr and die for something" (p. 43). Olive is engaged in the women's movement which, like any other cause, will give her a chance to fulfill her dream to die for something. She believes that by undertaking women's cause, she will be a part of the New England reform movements which characterized the "heroic age" (p. 189).

Although she belongs to Boston's wealthy class, she seems concerned about the situation of working women: "The unhappiness of women! The voice of their silent suffering was always in her ears, the ocean of tears . . . seemed to pour through her own eyes" (p. 64). Her identification with their oppression and suffering is genuine, but, as Judith Wilt contends, she is unable to alleviate or share their suffering; the source of "the most poignant suffering came from the injury of her taste" (p. 57).[9]

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[8] Wilt, p. 297.

Most of Olive's actions are regulated by her new ideas. For instance, she invites Basil to accompany her to hear Mrs. Farrinder. But once among the people who share her views, Miss Chancellor ignores her cousin. Upon seeing Miss Birdseye's shabby apartment, Basil wonders why Olive visits places she dislikes and associates with people she disapproves of:

> The place. . . struck even Basil Ransom with its flatness, and he said to himself that his cousin must have a very big bee in her bonnet to make her like such a house. He did not know then, and he never knew, that she mortally disliked it, and that in a career in which she was constantly exposing herself to offence and laceration, her most poignant suffering came from the injury of her taste. She had tried to kill that nerve, to persuade herself that taste was only frivolity in the disguise of knowledge (p. 57).

Olive is deeply at odds with herself. In every way, she is constantly attempting to negate her own nature and suppress her needs. She hates her wealth because she feels that Mrs. Farrinder resents her for it (p. 90). Olive also hates men as a class (p. 289). However, if Olive is criticized, James does not intend us to assume that an opposite attitude is necessary. His depiction of Mrs. Luna shows us this. If Olive consciously strives to dislike all men, Mrs. Luna defines herself as a person only by her femininity. Part of Mrs. Luna's function in the novel is to make the point that if Olive is lacking as a woman, the ideal is not to be found in the kind of femininity represented in Mrs. Luna. Her strategy in using her sexual charm to seduce Ransom makes him blush. Good manners do not necessarily allow for familiarity.

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[9] Wilt, p. 307.

Contrary to Mrs. Luna's impertinent forwardness with Basil, Olive's interaction with her distant cousin is lacking in cordiality. She invites him to her house, but when he presents himself at her door, she can barely bring herself to welcome him, or be civil to him: "He observed that Miss Chancellor's hand was at once cold and limp; she merely placed it in his, without exerting the smallest pressure" (p. 39). There is something lifeless about her as a result of which her smile "might have been likened to a thin ray of moonlight resting upon the wall of a prison" (p. 39).

If culture is not to be undercut by the forces of modern civilization, what is needed is first the ability to discriminate, second the will to discriminate, and third the ability and the will to try to discriminate justly. Olive, aware of the laxity of her age, can easily discriminate, but chooses not to:

> Olive had a standing quarrel with the levity, the good nature, of the judgments of the day; many of them seemed to her weak to imbecility, losing sight

> of all measures and standards, lavishing superlatives, delighted to be fooled. The age seemed to her relaxed and demoralized (p. 141).

She is satirized throughout *The Bostonians* because of her active role in the feminist cause and for abandoning the essence of her culture. Olive despises the vulgar side of publicity, and yet continues associating with it in the women's movement. In the end, there is not much difference between Miss Chancellor, on the one hand, and Tarrant, on the other, in their stand toward culture. Initially, Olive is offended by Pardon's lack of finesse and decorum and Tarrant's fraudulence and coarseness. But she uses Verena the way both men have wished for. For instance, it is Pardon who first suggests that Verena give " a lecture in the Music Hall, at fifty cents a ticket" (p.143). At the outset, Olive is repulsed by these impertinent suggestions; ironically, she executes all of them later on. Pardon puts Olive's change of character in perspective when he tells Mrs. Luna: "Miss Chancellor-- came round-came round considerably, there's no doubt of that; because a year or two ago she was terribly unapproachable. . . I have mollified her" (p. 411).

Indeed, Olive has come round considerably, to the extent of becoming "an accomplice in the materialistic world of hucksterism."[10] She, in fact, make[s] every sacrifice," as Basil notes to himself, "of taste for the sake of the largest hearing, and conform[s] herself to a great popular system" (p. 415). She begins accepting that which repulses her in the women's movement. She collaborates with the forces of publicity and advertisement in her association with the Tarrants and the Pardons and in hiring Mr. Filer, who is in the lecture-business. It is perhaps poetic justice that Olive has to live through the ordeal of facing "the howling and thumping" of the disappointed mob. James organizes the novel in such a way that Miss Chancellor has to shoulder some of the responsibilities of giving up her tradition to the forces of publicity.

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[10] Robert K. Martin, "*The Bostonians* : James's Dystopian View of Social Reform," *Mosaic* 18 (Winter, 1985): 109.

Olive is aware of the vulgarity of Verena and her milieu, yet she keeps reconciling herself with what offends her. Initially Olive is interested in educating Verena. In the process of playing the role of a devoted friend, she takes over Verena's life. In fact, she cuts Verena off from other relationships. She advances a great deal of money to the Tarrants so that they will renounce any parental claims. As a result, Olive has complete control over the innocent girl. But Olive is still not satisfied. She is haunted by the thought that Verena might leave her. Her paranoia is triggered by the various men who keep courting Verena. But Olive also pays a price: she cuts herself off too.

Olive is the victim of failings in her personality which set her apart from the rest: "She was subject to fits of tragic shyness," and "when she was agitated. . . her nature was like a skiff in a stormy sea" (pp. 40-41). Since Miss Chancellor thinks that she is "awkward, and embarrassed and dry" (p. 152), she feels incapable of delivering public speeches; consequently, she prepares Verena to be the mediator of her ideas. But James's portrayal of Verena as a shallow, unimaginative "perfect little actress" (p. 90), more interested in being in the limelight than in the movement, leaves no doubt that she is unable to articulate or comprehend the complexity of the feminist cause. It is Verena's "tragedy to learn to discriminate, to understand the consequences" of allowing herself to be in Basil's power.

At the outset, Olive wants only to "rescue the girl from the danger of vulgar exploitation," a laudable gesture, particularly when Selah Tarrant and Matthias Pardon want to use her for money. However, as Olive moves away from the essence of the feminist cause, "from the 'sanctity and power of the individual' to a world of abstract and 'faceless organizations trying to control social forces,' "[11] she undercuts the meaning and relevance of her beliefs.

Olive's reconciliation with the media and her endeavor to control Verena undermine her concern for women. She wants to "free" Verena from her parents' vulgarity. She goes to the extent of wanting to extract a promise from Verena not to marry anyone; she, however, does not follow this promise through because she wishes that Verena's allegiance to the women's movement and her commitment to Olive should "come from the growth of [her] perception" (p. 152). Yet, though Olive tells Verena, "Don't promise, don't promise," she also begs her, "But don't fail me -- don't fail me, or I shall die!" (p. 152).

By trying to force Verena to dislike men (p. 289) and by estranging her from other relations, Olive inevitably alienates her: "She felt Olive's grasp too clinching, too terrible" (p. 376). Despite her naivete, Verena can see that Miss Chancellor's obsession with the women's movement is unnatural: "Olive's earnestness began to appear [to Verena] as inharmonious with the scheme of the universe as if it had been a broken saw" (pp. 293-94).

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[11] In Judith Wilt, quoting Ruth Evelyn Quebe's article, "*The Bostonians*: Some Historical Sources and Their Implications," *Centennial Review* 25 (1981): 80-100.

Olive's endeavor to suppress her taste leads to a discord within her personality. But when she moderates her hostility toward men and relaxes her vigilance over Verena, her cultivated sensibility can overcome her obsession. While listening to classical music in the elegant drawing-room of Henry Burrage's home, Olive experiences harmony between herself and her surroundings:

> [T]here was a moment when she came near being happy. . . . Mrs. Burrage asked her son to play 'some little thing,' and he sat down to his piano and revealed a talent that might well have gratified that lady's pride. Olive was extremely susceptible to music, and it was impossible to her not to be soothed and beguiled by the young man's charming art. One 'little thing' succeeded another. . .; there was a faint fragrance from the burning logs, which mingled with the perfume of Schubert and Mendelssohn. . . . It was given Olive, under these circumstances, for half an hour, to surrender herself, to enjoy the music, to admit that Mr. Burrage played with exquisite taste, to feel as if the situation were a kind of truce. Her nerves were calmed, her problems--for the time--subsided. Civilization, under such an influence, appeared to have done its work; harmony ruled the scene; human life ceased to be a battle. She went so far as to ask herself why one should have a quarrel with it; the relations of

> men and women, in that picturesque grouping, had not the air of being internecine (p. 166).

But this surrender to the peaceful and harmonious atmosphere of civilized life is only temporary.

Indeed, Olive and Basil derive their values from the same established culture. Whereas he wants to preserve the patriarchal, Olive wants to revolutionize the same order, but in the process, she falls into Basil's extremism. She can be rude and cold to him, but, in fact, she has more in common with him than with her female friends. Both come out of established cultures which define their personalities and form their ways of thinking. For example, she is appalled at Verena's claim that she "prefers free union."

> Though Olive had no view about the marriage-tie except that she should hate it for herself--that particular reform she did not propose to consider--she didn't like the 'atmosphere' of circles in which such institutions were called into question (p. 105).

While Basil and Olive come out of a culture with history, customs and tradition, Verena is a product of mass culture. Verena's relationship with Basil and Olive can be seen as a vehicle for the portrayal of the state of American society. Since she is the object of strife between Olive and Basil, Verena becomes a symbol, on the one hand, of women's continuous struggle to free themselves from the patriarchal system; on the other hand, she serves as a tool for Basil to assert his authority since, as Tony Tanner argues, Ransom perceives her planned speech in the Music Hall as "representative of everything which," [in James's words] 'challenged all his manhood' "[12] Moreover, part of her function is to unknowingly encourage Olive to sacrifice her refined taste in the name of her new principles and beliefs.

Verena is too innocent to know the strength of her impact on someone like Olive. Miss Tarrant is "a flower of democracy." She has been raised by her father, a mesmeric healer, "a charlatan of the poor, lean. . . [and] shabby"; Selah Tarrant, "a moralist without moral sense," has not much to offer his daughter in the way of principles and values. As a result, Verena grows up "destitute of the perception of right and wrong" (p. 128). She is fearless only because she is unaware of discipline. " She was only supremely innocent; she didn't understand, she didn't interpret nor see the *portée* of what she described; she had no idea whatever of judging her parents" (p. 128). James goes on to say that

> [t]hough she had grown up among people who took for granted all sorts of queer laxities, she had kept the consummate innocence of the American girl, that innocence which was the greatest of all, for it had survived the abolition of walls and locks (p. 138).

Verena leads an "unexamined life," which James, like Socrates, believed not worth living.[13]

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[12] Tony Tanner,"*The Bostonians* and the Human Voice," *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men* . (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 169.

[13] F. W. Dupee, *Henry James* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1951), p. 25.

This innocence makes Verena both a charming figure and an easy victim of Olive's and Basil's opposed beliefs. Unlike the two complicated personalities who have to answer to their customs and traditions, Verena is free from all complications:

> She had been nursed in darkened rooms, and suckled in the midst of manifestations; she had begun to 'attend lectures' . . . when she was quite an infant, because her mother had no one to leave her with at home. She had sat on the knees of somnambulists, and had been passed from hand to hand by trance-speakers; . . . and had grown up among lady-editors of newspapers advocating new religions. . . . (p. 105).

Unlike Basil and Olive, Verena is not rooted in any tradition. She has never been exposed to an established value system. Indeed, Verena has no appeal to a form of order, no allegiance to any authority: "I don't remember," she tells Ransom, "ever to have had to make a sacrifice--not an important one" (p. 237). Mesmerized by this free nature and her gift as a speaker, Olive prefers to overlook Verena's vulgar origin. She asks herself "how [Verena] came to issue from such a pair" and likes to believe her descended from "the people," originating from "the social dusk of that mysterious democracy" (p. 101). Basil too is so magnetically drawn to Verena's charms that he chooses to ignore her crude parents and low associations: "I don't know where you come from nor how you come to be what you are, but you are outside and above all vulgarizing influences" (p. 330). What she voices as her ideas in public platforms indicates her vulnerability. For example, in the first private meeting with Olive, she surprises Olive by talking about the "marriage tie as she would have talked of the last novel" (p. 105), saying that she, indeed, "prefers free union"; she has no sense of discrimination, the backbone of culture, as James views it, and she does not have to reckon with hierarchical complications. She is both submissive and unworldly. Her only recommendation is her endeavor to please everyone. Basil draws to Verena's attention the fact that she is easily exploited:

> You ought to know that your connexion with all these rantings and ravings is the most unreal, accidental, illusory thing in the world. They were imposed on you by circumstances, by unfortunate associations, and you accepted them as you would have accepted any other burden, on account of the sweetness of your nature. You always want to please some one, and now you go lecturing about the country, and trying to provoke demonstrations, in order to please Miss Chancellor. . . . it isn't you . . . but an inflated little figure. . . whom you have invented and set on its feet, pulling strings behind it, to make it move and speak, while you try to conceal and efface yourself there. (p. 330).

Verena is, indeed, "an inflated little figure" and a "preposterous puppet" whose strings are pulled by anyone who has her in his or her power. She is aware of the sacrifices Basil wants her to make; she enumerates to Olive what he asks her to give up in exchange for his love:

> [H]ow can I love him when he tells me to give up everything, all our work, our faith, our future, never to

> give another address, to open my lips in public? How can I consent to that (p. 363)?

Yet, she meets all his demands because of her docility and resignation. She has no independent judgment, no background, and no education; she becomes a spokeswoman for the women's rights movement because at the outset her father wants to use her for money and fame, and she then becomes a voice for Olive, who is too shy to face the public. Verena "didn't pretend to have any control"; James informs us that

> She had no worldly pride, no traditions of independence, no ideas of what was done; but there was only one thing that equalled this perfectly gentle and natural insensibility to favours--namely, the inveteracy of her habit of not asking them (p. 183).

Miss Tarrant's "moral blankness" makes her, like an inexperienced child, easily impressionable. Like Undine Spragg, Edith Wharton's central character in *The Custom of the Country* , Verena is easily seduced by what is showy and glittering, as we can see from the way in which she is taken in by Mrs. Luna's expensive and gaudy clothes, failing to perceive her shallow and preposterous character. Indeed, she confesses to herself that "if she could have chosen at the beginning she would have liked to resemble Mrs. Luna" (p. 126).

Most of James's criticism in his collection of essays on the speech and manners of American women is relevant to the understanding of Verena's character. In these articles, James establishes a close relation between the speech and manners in a culture and its literary taste. Published in *Harper's Bazar* in 1906-

07, a long time after *The Bostonians* was published, the essays reveal some of James's views about American women. His criticism, prompted by the poor reception of *The Bostonians* , is aimed specifically at the upper middle-class female who, as James points out, has enough education and leisure time to read. However, he spares the "daughters of the people" who are not as qualified to read critically. Verena is exempt from James's criticism insofar as she too is a daughter of the people, but not insofar as she becomes active in the women's movement.

In *Speech and Manners* , James is direct in his attacks on the American woman. He claims that unlike her European counterpart, who has many hierarchical structures and authority figures to reckon with, the American woman grows up in a social system which fails to educate her and to raise "the question of discrimination, of taste, and relatedness." As a result, she is incapable of appreciating literary craftsmanship such as James's, which demands a faculty to "discriminate fine differences." A system of authority, which sets standards of judgment, is a requirement for culture, which pursues excellence, the ultimate goal. In terms which I think anticipate Ortega Y Gasset, James notes that "social, civil, conversational discipline consists in having to recognize knowledge and competence, and authority, accomplishment, experience and 'importance' greater than one's own" (*Speech* , pp. 77-78). Moreover, social relatedness, the major disciplinary element in a European woman's education, allows her "a possible grace, . . . a possible sweetness, a possible power to soothe, to please, and above all to exemplify" (*Speech*, p. 20). This form of education does not constitute a major factor in the

American woman's upbringing. James describes her as "the most confidently 'grown' and most encouraged plant in our democratic garden" (*Speech* , p. 16).

The American woman, however, has been encouraged to express her freedom--to act as she chooses, without respect for any form of discipline. This freedom degenerates into an easy dismissal of any form of authority:

> The fatal trap was thus originally set for the luckless assumption by our women of the most distinctive of their marks, that of their having been 'grown' in conditions all preponderantly easy because feminine; the great feminine collectivity asserting itself as against all interference and so quite effectually balancing against any discipline of friction within the herd (*Speech* , p. 91.)

James's articles raise the need for authority to discipline the American woman who is led to believe that she is the "fearless" and "finest" figure by a press which suffers equally from a lack of standards and a want of discrimination. From James's point of view, she is fearless only because she is ignorant of any form of discipline. "Like a spoiled child," as Inez Martinez argues, in his introduction to James's essays, ". . . she is incapable of relating to any reality except that of her own uneducated desires."[14] In his book *The Revolt of the Masses* , Ortega Gasset was to use similar terms--the psychology of the spoilt child--to describe a "mass man." Ortega also finds that one of the obvious traits of a "mass man" is his complete failure to relate to any authority but his own. Both James and Ortega understood this failure of relatedness as infantilism. In others words, the American woman, according to James, is too ignorant and too self-absorbed to make a literary and moral judgment requiring the subjugation of her impulses and desires to an outside authority.

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[14] Inez Martinez, "Introduction," *The Speech and Manners of American Women* , ed. E. S. Riggs (Lancaster: Lancaster House Press, 1973), p. 5.

For an American woman to learn other realities greater than her own and to appreciate good taste and manners as the chief elements of culture, she has to be educated and guided by her male counterpart. James claims that in more established societies the man takes the role of a mentor. He "corrects" and tames the wild tendencies, which are "preponderantly feminine":

> In societies other than ours the male privilege of correction springs, and quite logically, from the social fact that the male is the member of society primarily listened to--whereby his education, his speech, his tone, his standards, and connections, his general 'competence'. . . color the whole air, react upon his companion and establish for her the principal relation she recognizes (*Speech*, pp. 91-92).

The most obvious drawback of this proposition, as James himself acknowledges, is that with a few exceptions--Basil Ransom, for example--the American male is in no way qualified or prepared to take this office of correction. He is incapable of knowing or "profiting by the finest human experience of the past. . . [or] keep[ing] alive the subtlest and most perishable parts of tradition."[15] Instead, he invests his energy in worldly achievements, abandoning the role that James attributes to a European man--"[to invent] the standard and set the tune, and ... [to] constitute, in the whole matter, the authority"--to be taken over by the already undisciplined American woman (*Speech* , p. 27).

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[15] F. R. Leavis, *Education and the University* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1943), p. 144.

Taking into consideration James's views about the male's active role in a female's education enables us to understand Basil's function in the novel. He takes upon himself the role that James attributes to a European man, to set the standards and constitute authority. Nevertheless, his endeavor to "educate" Verena involves asserting his control over her and reducing her to dependency and resignation. She is driven into a union "so far from brilliant" (p. 433). She has just embarked on a journey of continuing sacrifices and recurring miseries. She is forced to renounce her personal wishes and social activities in order to meet her future husband's egotistical demands. To live with her domineering husband, she has to learn how to live through continuous struggle with the painful reality of her life.

The end of the novel conveys James's statement about American democracy. He forces Verena, "a flower of democracy," into what he considers the best solution given the alternatives. W. H. Auden provides an account of the perspective from which James judges American culture:

> The fundamental presupposition of romanitas , secular or sacred, is that virtue is prior to liberty, i.e. what matters most is that people should think and act rightly; of course, it is preferable that they should do so consciously of their own free will, but if they cannot or will not, they

> must be made to, the majority by the spiritual pressure of education and tradition, the minority by physical coercion, for liberty to act wrongly is not liberty but license. The antagonistic presupposition, which is not peculiar to America and would probably not be accepted by many Americans, but for which this country has come, symbolically, to stand, is that liberty is prior to virtue, *i.e.* liberty cannot be distinguished from license, for freedom of choice is neither good or bad but the human pre-requisite without which virtue and vice have no meaning. Virtue is, of course, preferable to vice, but to choose vice is preferable to having virtue chosen for one.[16]

This particular passage by Auden is quoted by Brian Lee to support his argument that "the whole tenor of [*The Bostonians*] suggests that Verena Tarrant gained her freedom by marrying Basil Ransom at the expense of equality and this freedom is ultimately the more valuable."[17]

Since Verena grows up with the fundamentals of democracy, which Emerson summarizes in his Journals as "the doctrine [t]o judge for yourself. . . reverence thyself; be true to thyself,"[18] it is not surprising that she makes use of her freedom of choice. But James implies that since she does not possess the discipline achieved by education and tradition, she is unable to "think and act rightly." Therefore, James makes it clear that her marriage to Basil, although not completely happy or even well-grounded, is still more desirable than any other alternative.[19]

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[16] W. H. Auden, "Introduction," *The American Scene* , (New York: Scribner's, 1946), XV.

[17] Brian Lee, *The Novels of Henry James: A Study of Culture and Consciousness* (Edward Arnold, 1978), p. 26.

[18] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selections From Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Stephen E. Whicher (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), p. 19.

Through this unhappy union, James suggests that, while in *The Europeans* the stability of the antebellum period allows for harmony of the sexes, in *The Bostonians* , the emergence of new roles and possibilities for women and the traditional expectations of men affect the relationship of man and woman in general. In a period of transition, there is no particular example to follow; consequently, the most fundamental institutions in an individual's education, such as the family, become the targets of change. In *The Bostonians* there is a significant absence of a stable family, the implication being that no woman in the novel is capable of exemplifying what James considers the proper role of a woman.

Publicity, a major factor of mass culture, has a levelling effect on American culture. The novelist juxtaposes Basil's failure in public life due to his conservative views with the success of journalists like Matthias Pardon. James suggests that the degeneracy of American society is closely interconnected not only with the decline of antebellum cultural values but also with the rise of mass communication, especially the press.

Despite his old-fashioned ways and disenchantment with the "talkative, querulous, hysterical age," "an age of hollow phrases,"

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[19] One can also argue that there is a lot of common sense in Olive's contention that women, like Mrs. Luna and Miss Tarrant, "cannot separate the injustices of a patriarchal system from the men who have been formed by that system."

Basil is as much a participant in this world of self-promotion and mass communication as is Pardon. His intention to prevent Verena from delivering her speech, suggestively entitled "A Woman's Reason," is motivated by his concern to keep women away from what he believes to be the area of men only. The suggested violence in the closing of the novel evokes Basil's uncertainty about his belief in himself: "Verena suddenly shrieked; and her piercing cry might have reached the front. But Ransom had already, by muscular force, wrenched her away, and was hurrying her out" (p. 432). His purpose to keep Verena away from public communication does not stem from his opposition to publicity. "He had always had a desire for public life; to cause one's ideas to be embodied in national conduct appeared to him the highest form of human enjoyment" (p. 198). He denies Verena what he secretly longs for because he thinks that women do not belong in public occupations.

Both his attempts to establish his name in public life--as a lawyer and a writer--mainly fail. For a long time, he strives to make his views public, but his writing is repeatedly rejected because his views are reactionary. Basil expresses bitterness and disappointment when he describes his failure with editors, whom he refers to as a "mean, timorous lot, always saying they want something original, but deadly afraid of it when it comes" (p. 326). Indeed, Basil's way of communication anticipates Bellow's "select" man's ineffective way of communication in face of the massive growth of the media. Ransom resents Verena because of her success with the "gullible public." While listening to one of Verena's speeches, which he initially describes as a "harangue," he meditates that

> the sort of thing she was able to do, to say, was an article for which there was more and more demand--fluent, pretty, third-rate palaver, conscious or unconscious perfected humbug; the stupid, gregarious, gullible public, the enlightened democracy of his native land, could swallow unlimited draughts of it. He was sure she could go, like that, for several years, with her portrait in the druggists' windows and her posters on the fences, and during that time would make a fortune sufficient to keep her in affluence for evermore (pp. 314-15).

The Southerner's frustration is so profound that he secretly contemplates the idea that "if he should become her husband, he should know a way to strike her dumb." It is surprising that he should be so confident when he gets his one article accepted. He thinks that he can support a wife with his writing. While he manages to convince Verena that his pen will be his source of income in the future, we, of course, share Olive's skepticism: "And this vision of a literary career is based entirely upon an article that hasn't yet seen the light? I don't see how a man of any refinement can approach a woman with so beggarly an account of his position in life" (p. 368). The shabbiness of his two rooms illustrates his poverty. As a Southerner, he remains an outsider in his endeavor to find a home in New England and in his struggle to hold on to his values.

The kind of writing that finds much success with the American audience is evoked in *The Bostonians* through Matthias Pardon's journalism. Both Matthias Pardon and Selah Tarrant illustrate well James's views of the levelling influence of the press on the American democratic system. Tarrant's ultimate wish is to be included in the world of publicity:

> In reality he has one all-absorbing solicitude--the desire to get paragraphs put into newspapers, paragraphs of which he had hitherto been the subject. . . . His ideal of bliss was to be as regularly and indispensably a component part of the newspaper as the title and date, or list of fires, or the column of Western jokes. The vision of that publicity haunted his dreams, and he would gladly have sacrificed to it the innermost sanctities of home. Human existence to him, indeed, was a huge publicity. (pp. 120-23).

The mesmeric healer wants to use his daughter for his own social advancement, especially as he thinks that he plays a significant role in inspiring her to deliver public speeches: "He looked like the priest of a religion that was passing through the stage of miracles" (p. 120). His strongest ambition is to see Verena's name "advertised among the 'personals,'" (p. 120). He embraces the feminist cause because of its newness. As he has failed to make a name in numerous other movements, he wants to acquire some publicity with the help of his "gifted" daughter's publicity: "Success was not success so long as his daughter's physique. . . were not included in the 'Jottings'" (p. 121).

Matthias Pardon, the journalist, does not have any concern for women's emancipation either; he is interested in Verena because "she was a great card, and some one ought to play it" (pp. 154-55). And he volunteers to play her card. With "his small fair features, remarkably neat and pretty eyes," the journalist appears more effeminate than Olive and Dr. Prance. His proposal to Verena lacks passion, for he is, in fact, in "a state of intimacy with the newspaper, the cultivation of the great arts of publicity" (p. 139). Furthermore, "his passion was not a jealous one, and included a remarkable disposition to share the object of his affection with the American people" (p. 140).

As Brian Lee suggests, Matthias Pardon "epitomizes all that is worst in democratic institutions," especially the press. [20] The threat that the press represents to culture was a major concern of James's before he wrote *The Bostonians* . In *The Portrait of a Lady* , for example, Henrietta Stackpole is presented as a stock character, epitomizing the vulgarity of journalism. Miss Stackpole is too familiar, "walking in without knocking at the door," as Ralph tells Isabel. Like Pardon, Henrietta has no concept of privacy. She wants to publish articles about the Touchetts' life in England without taking their sense of privacy into consideration. Henrietta Stackpole becomes likable by the end of the novel because of her loyalty to Isabel and her devotion to Ralph Touchett, but Matthias Pardon remains grotesque.

In *The Bostonians* , we see James confronting this central issue of the age--the press in particular. As he observed in his *Notebooks* , journalism boomed in the United States with its "impudent invasion of privacy--the extinction of all concepts of privacy" (p. 47), bestowing fame and celebrity on anyone who embraced the newest fashionable cause.

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[20] Lee, *The Novels of Henry James* , p. 23.

Pardon, like Verena, is a product of mass culture; his belief in and devotion to the press indicates a change in cultural values. "He regards the mission of mankind as a perpetual evolution of telegrams" (p. 140), and he "had a sort of enamel of good humor which showed that his indelicacy was his profession; and he asked for revelations of the *vie intime* of his victims with the bland confidence of a fashionable physician inquiring about symptoms" (p. 155). We applaud Mrs. Luna when she vehemently refuses to give away any information about Olive and Verena before the planned lecture in Music Hall:

> 'Really, sir, I don't know, and I don't in the least care; I have nothing to do with the business!' Mrs. Luna cried angrily.
>
> The reporter stared; then, eagerly, 'You have nothing to do with it--you take an unfavorable view, you protest?' And he was already feeling in a side-pocket for his note-book.
>
> 'Mercy on us! are you going to put that in the paper?' Mrs. Luna exclaimed. . . . [She] sank into the nearest chair, with a groan, covering her face with her hands, 'Heaven help me, I am glad I am going to Europe!'
>
> 'That is another little item--everything counts,' said Matthias Pardon, making a rapid entry in his tablets. 'May I inquire whether you are going to Europe in consequence of your disapproval of your sister's views?'
>
> Mrs. Luna sprang up again, almost snatching the memoranda out of his hand. 'If you have the

> impertinence to publish a word about me, or to mention my name in print, I will come to your office and make such a scene!'
>
> 'Dearest lady, that would be a godsend!' Mr. Pardon cried enthusiastically (pp. 409-10).

James expresses the threat journalism poses to culture in his portrayal of Pardon. As Olive observes, Pardon's mind "took merely a gossip view of great tendencies" (p. 141). Although he lacks perception and imagination to be creative, he remains influential and popular, particularly among those who promote "new ideas"; he holds no reverence or delicacy for his subject:

> For this ingenious son of his age all distinction between the person and the artist had ceased to exist; the writer was personal, the person food for newsboys, and everything and every one were every one's business. All things, with him, referred themselves to print, and print meant simply infinite reporting, a promptitude of announcement, abusive when necessary, or even when not, about his fellow-citizens. He poured contumely on their private life, on their personal appearance, with the best conscience in the world. (p. 139)

Indeed, what matters most to Pardon is not the quality but the quantity of what he prints in newspapers. He lacks the civility of the artist who takes others' privacy seriously. He has no standard of judgment, no sense of discrimination. "Everything to him was very much the same, he had no sense of proportion or quality, but the newest thing was what came nearest exciting in his mind the sentiment of respect" (p. 140). It is not surprising, then, that he appeals to Selah Tarrant as the appropriate husband for Verena. He knows how to "handle" her, and he wants to fulfill most of Tarrant's aspirations for his daughter, particularly with the American public:

> It was Tarrant's conviction that if Matthias Pardon should seek Verena in marriage, it would be with a view to producing her in public; and the advantage for the girl of having a husband who was at the same time reporter, interviewer, manager, agent, who had the command of the principal 'dailies,' would write her up and work her, as it were, scientifically--the attraction of all this was too obvious to be insisted on (p. 140).

In short, the notorious journalist represents the spirit of democracy which encourages complete freedom for the undiscriminating press. With this "universal permissiveness," which eliminates the critical spirit, a necessary requirement for pursuing excellence, vulgar elements of American society--like the Pardons--will eventually lead civilization into mediocrity.

In *The Bostonians* , James is concerned with this unsettled era of Boston's history, when customs and traditions were being questioned in accordance with the spirit of reform, when the relationship between the sexes was not defined, when the center of authority became unfocussed, when customs and traditional values were put into question, when journalism boomed, influencing and manipulating public opinion. James depicts the changes overtaking post-Civil War America which reflect a society in disarray. Whereas *The Europeans* provides a kind of peace and harmony which pertains to pastoral environments and allows people to become integral parts of their culture, *The Bostonians* is set mostly in urban milieux: Boston and New York. James chronicles some of the physical changes in Boston. In *The Europeans* , Baroness Münster's sensibility is offended by some aspects of the American scene. She hates the sight of "a huge, low omnibus" (p. 34) and a white "tall church spire" (p. 34), which stick out as she assesses the view from her hotel window. The location of Olive's house on Charles Street includes aspects of the drastic changes which permeate New England. These changes dictate new ways of life and force people like Olive to view a sordid reality; from Olive's window one could see

> a few chimneys and steeples, straight, sordid tubes of factories and engine-shops, or spare, heavenward finger of the New England meeting house. There was something inexorable in the poverty of the scene, shameful in the meanness of its details, which gave a collective impression of boards and tins and frozen earth, sheds and rotting piles, railway-lines striding flat across a thoroughfare of puddles, . . . loose fences, vacant lots, mounds of refuse, yards bestrewn with iron pipes, telegraph poles and bare wooden backs of places (p. 185).

James's scope in the novel is not social strata, but he puts into perspective the sweeping changes which permeate American society. As Irving Howe argues, this ugliness of the industrialized environment indicates "the slowly accumulating seediness of the city itself as it stumbles into the factory age" (Introduction. XII).

The effect of the factory age becomes palpable in the social division it creates. The difference between the Southern tradition embodied mostly in Basil's conservative deportment, and New England democracy, epitomized in the feminists' urge for reforms, is not the only division James observes in American society. Despite his constant interest in the upper class, James becomes aware of the emergence of a new class in the urban scene: the "urban proletariat." As Basil and Verena leave Central Park after their long walk, they come on "[g]roups of the unemployed, the children of disappointment from beyond the seas, [who] propped themselves against the low, sunny wall of the Park; and on the other side the commercial vista of the Sixth Avenue stretched away with a remarkable absence of aerial perspective" (p. 332). Unlike Bellow, James does not concern himself too much with the situation of the city poor, but he implies that the division between the "haves" and the "have-nots" has a deep effect on American society.[21]

In *The Bostonians* , Henry James assesses the American way of life and provides a critique of American culture. The continuous struggle over Verena between Olive Chancellor, the New England reformist, and Basil Ransom, the Southern conservative, is not to be interpreted as simply a matter of two opposed beliefs emanating from two different backgrounds. James makes the point that what is wrong is not just a matter of Olive's personality and Basil's ego: there is something fundamentally amiss with the whole of Boston society. The struggle between the two major characters represents the working out of an essential problem of the individual's--the female's and the male's--role in a society, in this case post-Civil War New England. At the heart of *The Bostonians* is "a movement of sexual revolution [that] is to be understood as a question which a culture puts to itself, and right down to its very roots. It is a question about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman . . . about the quality of being which people wish to have" (Trilling, *Opposing* , p. 111).

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[21] Tanner, "*The Bostonians* and the Human Voice," p. 163.

Nevertheless, in spite of this social and cultural turmoil, James allows his protagonist, Basil Ransom, the possibility of controlling and preventing Verena from delivering her speech in the Boston Music Hall; this victory does not restore the stability and equanimity which characterizes the lives of New Englanders in *The Europeans.* Basil does not possess Felix's disposition and openness to new experiences. He has the benefit of a cultural heritage, but he is unable to reckon with the feminist cause because it poses a serious threat to his role as a male. Like Robert Acton, he is too insecure to deal with his female partner as an equal. However, it is significant that in *The Bostonians* , it is still possible for a defender of culture to be granted an upper hand over others, like Olive and Verena, who embrace and advocate changes.

Olive's devotion to the women's movement is motivated by her awareness of women's history, but her fanatical views and collaboration with the media undercut her effort. Although she suffers when she is forced to face the "cries and groans and hisses" (p. 427), there is a possibility that this experience will allow her to find her voice. In the future, she will not need a medium, like Verena, to articulate her opinions.

Family unity, as James knows it in his childhood and underlines it in *The Europeans* , is absent in *The Bostonians* . The function of the family as transmitter of the common values dissipates with the inevitable changes. The breakup of family unity contributes largely to the disorientation of the characters and the disintegration of cultural values. In other words, while *The Europeans* depicts an established culture which provides stability and a strong sense of identity to its members, and allows them to function as integral parts of the community, *The Bostonians* presents the same culture but in a period of confusion. James seems to suggest that there was a possibility for a vigorous American culture to establish its roots, history and sense of tradition before the Civil War, but industrialization with its destructive effects on social structures, especially family unity and man/woman's relationships, hinders this possibility.

Consequently, culture becomes endangered by the growing cultural autonomy of the media, especially the press, "one of the inevitable concomitants of democracy"[22] which is "all inclusion and confusion."[23] James emphasizes the importance of the concerned minority, like Basil Ransom, to save the tradition of sensibility. However, in providing some reservations about Basil's character and motives in undertaking the task of safeguarding culture, James pinpoints the fact that the situation of American culture in the face of inevitable social changes is not only critical but also complex. James implies that there is no easy, or clear solution that will preserve culture from the rise of mass culture and from the pressures posed by the levelling effects of democracy.

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[22] Lee, *The Novels of Henry James* , p. 23.

[23] Henry James, *The Art of The Novel* (New York: Scribner's, 1954), p. 120.

IV. Herzog's Participation in The Disintegration of Family Unity

Henry James and Saul Bellow originate from two different belief systems and lived two generations apart--James, 1843-1916, and Bellow, 1915- --, yet, in their writings, they embrace much the same stand in relation to American culture. In spite of the numerous changes that have occurred between James' and Bellow's life-times, both basically see that there are forces threatening to culture, and that these forces consist most importantly of the breakdown of family unity, which is where traditional values used to be preserved and transmitted to future generations, of the strong influence of the mass media on public opinion, and of the growing cultural authority of the mass man.

James, deeply rooted in Anglo-Saxon traditions, offers a conservative critique of democratic society, one which attempts to resist its inevitable changes. He emphasizes the importance of "intelligent zeal" in safeguarding culture. Although in his portrayal of Basil Ransom in *The Bostonians* , James shows some of the limitations of those who want to preserve the traditional order, he emphasizes the importance of the concerned few. Bellow, on the other hand, is equivocal in his stand on democracy. *Herzog* marks the beginning of Bellow's conscious critical analysis of American democracy and its levelling effects on culture. He has modified his position towards American democracy over the years of his writing. In an interview published in 1984, for example, Bellow insists that his views of American society are, indeed, informed by his Jewish heritage:

> I've always been devotedly faithful to my history, and I've never struck attitudes that didn't suit it. I am not a WASP trained on the classics, the stray descendant of a golden age of gentlemen lost in the modern abysses. . . . My Jewish history gives me an entirely different orientation. . . . I had read my Henry Adams, my Spengler, and T. S. Eliot's *The Idea of Christian Society* ; and I knew there would be no place for me as a Jew in that kind of civilization. Therefore all the greater was my enthusiasm for embracing this American democracy with all its crudities, which nevertheless granted me an equality which I felt mine by right. I wasn't going to be ruled off the grounds by those WASP hotshots; and so I rejected all of that. On the contrary, I saw 'traditionalism' as a further descent into the nihilistic pit.[1]

Bellow embraces American democracy because it allows room for differences among ethnic groups. At first glance he seems entirely dismissive of the conservative stand in relation to American democracy; nevertheless, in his writing, he leans towards James's view that the survival of culture depends upon efforts made by the qualified few to preserve it in face of the increasing influence of mass culture. Bellow's article "A Matter of the Soul," which came out in 1975, makes the point that

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[1] Rockwell Gray, Harry White and Gerald Nemanic, "Interview with Saul Bellow," *TriQuarterly* 60 (Spring-Summer, 1984): 648.

> The real thing will have to be preserved by tiny minorities until such abuses, probably inevitable in this stage of civilization, are driven out by an increase of stability and by the growth of taste and discrimination.[2]

Bellow echoes James's conservative view that if culture is to be preserved, it is the responsibility of "intelligent zeal" to safeguard it. As we have seen, however, he distances himself from T. S. Eliot's suggested elite, which he feels excludes him.

As a Jew, Bellow is aware of his heritage and his place as a member of a minority group in the United States. But, while enthusiastically embracing American democracy for allowing him the same equality as the"WASP hotshots," he remains fully conscious of its shortcomings. In his novels, he engages in a critique of the American way of life, acknowledging its crudities yet allowing for some possibilities for happiness, even if they are slight. Such possibilities are apparent, for example, in the equality that is granted to marginal groups, and in the success of such writers as Bellow.

Bellow's response to American democracy has changed over the three decades of his life as a writer. Early in his career, he was concerned for his place as a Jewish writer in American literary circles. Writing for a predominantly Anglo-Saxon audience, he was--he feels in retrospect--too cautious, and too accommodating in what he wrote. In an interview published in *Paris Review* in 1966, he explained why he was so controlled:

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[2] Saul Bellow, "A Matter of the Soul," *Opera News* 1 (Jan. 1975): 29.

> [F]or a young man in my position there were social inhibitions... I had good reason to fear that I would be put down as a foreigner, an interloper. It was made clear to me when I studied literature in the university that as a Jew and the son of Russian Jews I would probably never have the right *feeling* for Anglo-Saxon traditions, for English words.[3]

Bellow started off being fairly uncritical of American society. For example, in *The Adventures of Augie March* , the main character does not necessarily portray Bellow's opinions, but Augie's undiscriminating views indicate the writer's desire to fit in the social milieu. Augie refuses to face the reality of his environment--"its wickedness, rawness and vulgarity"; instead, as Bellow commented in an interview seventeen years after the book was published:

> I think he expressed what was probably very genuine just then for adolescent Americans of immigrant background: the desire to embrace everybody, the desire for fraternity, the wish to be the lover of experience for its own sake, the lover of novelty. At any rate, he did not intend to be disappointed (Gray, p. 640).

As with his hero, Bellow's "desire to embrace everybody" was more important to him than any wish to interfere with the general flow of American society. In retrospect, and after he achieves intellectual maturity and literary recognition, Bellow criticizes Augie particularly for his carefree attitude, which is indiscriminately accepting. As Bellow notes, the book is "inaccurate. It's not the way it was; it's just the way Augie wanted it to be" (Gray, p. 640)

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[3] Gordon Lloyd Harper . "The Art of Fiction XXXVII: Saul Bellow," *Paris Review* 9 (1966): 56.

Herzog looks at American society with a critical eye. With the publication of this novel in 1964, Bellow established his reputation as a serious writer with a clear vision of the modern condition. Of course, Herzog, the major character of the novel, is still too caught up in his personal problems to provide a clear alternative to "Mass Man." However, in Bellow's subsequent novels, namely *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1969) and *The Dean's December* (1982), his critique of American society is direct, and his protagonists, Mr. Sammler and Dean Corde, are too committed to the cultural tradition to mind, in Sammler's case, alienation from the social stream, and, in Corde's case, the loss of a job in a society that grows indifferent to taste and discrimination.

In this chapter, I will show that Moses Herzog possesses a refined sensibility and comes from an established Jewish heritage which allows him a strong sense of individuality and an insightful outlook, yet he fails to find happiness in his personal life. In his relationships with women, he runs into many contradictions: on the one hand, in his experience with women of traditional background, like Daisy, his first wife, Sono, his Japanese mistress, and Ramona, his current mistress, Herzog adopts the patriarchal orthodox Jewish view which does not allot man and woman the same rights. On the other hand, Herzog is drawn to and fascinated by modern women who present many challenges; however, he does not know how to communicate with them. Consequently, when he gives up the stability of his first marriage, which had sustained the traditional values he grew up with, Herzog demonstrates his inability to live by Jewish values. I will then argue that in his experience with Madeleine, his second wife, Herzog reveals the ineffectiveness of Jewish values to withstand the social changes in modern America. He becomes directly involved in the conflict which results from the continuous changes in the sexes' roles in society and the struggle for power which both Herzog and Madeleine become engaged in. I will then discuss the fact that Madeleine's relationship with her lover Valentine Gersbach opens Moses's eyes to the problems which permeate American society, namely the increasing cultural authority of the mass man who uses mass communication to advance himself, the pressing threat of the media to culture. Finally, I will argue that the city environment has a strong impact on its inhabitants' psyches as they resort to violence to express their alienation from human experience; the city becomes the arena where mass culture flourishes.

Herzog, like Basil Ransom in *The Bostonians* , takes customs, traditions and old values seriously. Family education is crucial to the makeup of his personality. Moses Elkanah Herzog, a Canadian born of Russian immigrant parents, grows up in a very closely connected, unified, patriarchal family in which the parents, especially the mother, devotes themselves to their children. Sarah Herzog, the daughter of a famous "misnagid," had been a lady in the Old World, with extensive wealth, expensive linens and numerous servants in Petersburg, yet "[n]ow she was cook, washerwoman, seamstress on Napoleon Street in the slum. Her hair turned gray, and she lost her teeth, her very fingernails wrinkled. Her hands smelled of the sink."

(p. 139) In spite of her diverse tasks and lack of means, Mother Herzog "found the strength to spoil her children." She sacrifices her health striving to bring them up to their fullest potentials. Her children are her life, and she wants the best for them. Despite Aunt Zipporah's constant objections, and in reply to her persistent suggestion to send the children to work to help out, Mother Herzog has only this to say: "'Why shouldn't the children study if they have intelligence, talent'" (146). In spite of their crippling poverty, she somehow manages to find the means to pay for Helen's piano lessons at the conservatory. Her wish is for Herzog to become "a great *lamden*--a rabbi" (p. 131). Moses's mother has both positive and negative effects on his personality.

Herzog derives his ability to care about others from the Jewish family as he knows it. His reminiscences and reverence for his mother bring to mind James's depiction and eulogy of his mother in his *Notebooks* . Herzog's parents have inculcated in him the desire to try to be useful to others. They are the source of his altruistic values: "brotherhood is what makes a man human" (p. 272). Although the Herzogs did not lead a comfortable life, they allowed Ravitch, the Yiddish derelict, to board with them. They also helped him with his drinking problems, which he developed in North America after he failed to trace his wife and two children, who were lost in the war in Russia. Herzog's friend Nachman draws Moses' attention to his mother's influence on him; Herzog's goodness of heart derives from his mother's generosity to the poor:

> But a good man, Moses. Rooted in yourself. But a good heart. Like your mother. A gentle spirit. You got it from

> her. I was hungry and she fed me. She washed my hands and sat me at the table. That I remember. She was the only one who was kind to my Uncle Ravitch, the drunkard. I sometimes say a prayer for her (p. 134).

Herzog also learns the importance of the dignity of the individual from his father. Although Jonah Herzog is a failure as a provider, his wife stands by him and supports him all the time. She comforts him, soothes his injuries, and watches over him when he comes back beaten by the hijackers in his attempt as a bootlegger to smuggle whisky across the border. Nevertheless, to his wife and children, he is "a sacred being, a king" (p.147). Herzog's ideal of a man derives from his Jewish family heritage, and his father's teaching. He says about his father: "Personalities are good only for comic relief. But I am still a slave to Papa's pain. The way Father Herzog spoke of himself! That could make one laugh. His *I* had such dignity" (p. 149).

Herzog's strong sense of who he is stems from the stability of his upbringing. His family education is important because he derives his ethical values from his parents' Jewish teaching. The common values of a stable culture rely on family, traditions, and customs to define it. In retrospect, Moses's childhood seems to him to have been the best time in his life, a time when he learned the Jewish values--to care for and share with others, to be involved in family's affairs, and to respect the dignity of a human being--, a time when he experienced genuine feelings, a time when he truly loved the members of his family and is loved in return. It is this happiest time that he secretly longs to go back to:

> Napoleon Street, rotten, toylike, crazy and filthy, riddled, flogged with harsh weather--the bootlegger's boys reciting ancient prayers. To this Moses' heart was attached with great power. Here was a wider range of human feelings than he had ever again been able to find. . . . All he ever wanted was there (p. 140).

Because he is deeply rooted in a cultural tradition, Herzog illustrates *l'élan vital* of a discerning mind when pressured by personal and social entanglements. At the outset, the breakdown of his second marriage has such a destructive emotional impact on Herzog that he cannot distance himself far enough to see things clearly. Through his introspective journey, he strives to find peace with himself and endeavors to make sense of the social turmoil that surrounds him. In fact, he is not willing to surrender himself to "historical necessity," which asks him to sacrifice "[his] poor, squawking, niggardly individuality" (p. 93). He insists on living up to an ideal standard he has set for himself, refusing to "sacrifice. . . [his] individuality."

> But of course he, Herzog, predictably bucking such trends, had characteristically, obstinately, defiantly, blindly but without sufficient courage or intelligence tried to be a *marvelous* Herzog, a Herzog who, perhaps clumsily, tried to live out marvelous qualities vaguely comprehended (p. 93).

In this respect, Herzog, in his endeavor to be "a marvelous Herzog," has something in common with what Ortega Y Gasset describes as a "select man" in his book, *The Revolt of the Masses* :

> The select man is not the petulant person who thinks himself superior to the rest, but the man who demands more of himself than the rest. . . . The most radical division that it is possible to make of humanity is that which splits it into two classes of creatures: those who make great demands on themselves, piling up difficulties and duties; and those who demand nothing special of themselves, but for whom to live is to be every moment what they already are, without imposing on themselves any effort towards perfection; mere buoys that float on the waves.[4]

Herzog shares some of the qualities of Ortega's "select man," but there are significant differences. We know, for example, that Herzog does not always demand more of himself than of others; on the contrary, he sometimes fails to fulfill those duties he already has. He himself remarks that "he had been a bad husband twice. . . . To his son and his daughter he was a loving but bad father. To his own parents he had been an ungrateful child. . . . To his brothers and sisters, affectionate but remote. With his friends, an egotist" (pp. 4 - 5). In spite of the self-mocking tone, there is some truth in his self-accusation. Rovit offers an interesting suggestion that in criticizing Moses's women-shopping, Bellow may be influenced by

> a religious inheritance of female degradation that may be related to the traditional prayer that orthodox Jews recite

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[4] José Ortega Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: Norton & Company, 1932), p. 15.

> every morning, offering prayers to the Almighty that they were born men and not women.[5]

"The man who shops from woman to woman, though his heart aches with idealism, with the desire for pure love, has entered the female realm" (p. 188). In his personal relationships, for example, Moses fails to live by the discipline of the Hebrew tradition. Herzog is embedded in the Jewish tradition; however, this tradition is not totally perfect. In his relationships with many women of traditional background, Moses displays the influence of the teaching of orthodox Jews who do not perceive man and woman as equal beings.

In his first marriage, Herzog finds most of the values he learned from his own family because Daisy is brought up in a background similar to his. Although her mother Polina is "a Russian Jewish suffragette," Daisy believes in the traditional values. Both her parents are Jewish Russian immigrants who inculcate in her the ways of the Old World. Hence Daisy, the "cool," "regular," and "conventional Jewish woman," knows the importance of a family in maintaining culture and tradition. In her marriage to Moses, she, like Sarah Herzog, maintains the stability of the home. "Stability, symmetry, order, containment were Daisy's strength" (p. 126). She stands by her husband; encourages him through good and bad times. "An utterly steady, reliable woman, responsible to the point of grimness" (p. 221). With her, the "learned professor" led a fulfilling life, personal and public: "As long as Moses was married to Daisy, he had led the perfect ordinary life of an assistant professor, respected and stable"

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[5] Earl Rovit, *Saul Bellow* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1967), p. 30.

(p. 5). However, even with this strong and stable woman, Herzog proves to be a bad husband. He forces her, for example, to endure a cold winter in a cottage in Connecticut so that he may finish his book, *Romanticism and Christianity*. As a sensitive mother and understanding wife, Daisy silently puts up with the disagreeable Herzog, his melancholic temperament, his sad oboe music, his brooding, and the isolation of a cottage in winter. And she puts up with Moses's illicit relationships with Sono Oguki, a Japanese woman, and Madeleine, his future wife. In retrospect, he admits to himself that "by my irregularity and turbulence of spirit I brought out the very worst in Daisy" (p. 126). In spite of everything, Daisy still insists on keeping the family together and refuses to consent to a divorce. Eventually, Moses is forced to divorce her anyway to please the beautiful Madeleine. In the process of exhuming his past in order to come to terms with his mistakes, Herzog has just this to say about how he treated Daisy: "I gave up the shelter of an orderly, purposeful, lawful existence because it bored me, and I felt it was simply a slacker's life" (p. 103).

In giving up Daisy and what she stands for, Moses gives up his traditional Jewish teachings. More than just an end to a marriage, Herzog's separation from Daisy marks a deep change in his outlook on life. In rejecting Daisy, he rejects his mother's strong influence on him. Both Sarah and Daisy are the conventional Jewish mothers and wives who represent love, stability and harmony in family life; however, while Herzog's mother is so overprotective that her man and children are unable to achieve independence and a sense of the self, Daisy allows herself to be taken for granted. Daisy's qualities do not present any challenge to Herzog's inquisitive mind. As an obedient wife, Daisy does not stimulate Herzog any more. She serves to maintain the security and stability his mother had provided for him as a child. But this need for stability is only a phase in his emotional and intellectual development. With "slant green eyes, large ones, kinky, golden but lusterless hair, a clear skin" (p. 126), she epitomizes reliability devoid of passion. With her sense of order and her calm disposition, Daisy belongs to the time of Moses' life when he is a student writing his Ph. D. thesis. He needs her calm demeanor and sense of stability to concentrate on his project. But as he becomes successful in his work and established among his peers, he longs for excitement with younger and more demanding women. The belief in the Jewish tradition cannot sustain a passionless and stagnant marriage.

Similarly, in his relationships with other women of traditional upbringing like Sono and Ramona, Moses displays his own shortcomings and the limitations of traditional values. There are obvious similarities between Daisy and Sono; Sono's relationship with Moses ends in failure as well. Coming from a very old culture, growing up in a patriarchal family, Sono, like Daisy, believes strongly in comforting and soothing her man:

> During the troubled time when he was being divorced from Daisy and he came to visit Sono in her West Side apartment, she would immediately run the little tub and fill it with Macy's bath salts. She unbuttoned Moses' shirt, took off his clothes. . . (p. 168).

Sono's self-denial, like James's mother's, originates from the patriarchal system she grows up in and which trains her to believe that the meaning of her existence, as a woman, depends on fulfilling her man's wishes. In her devotion to Moses,

> Sono asked for no great sacrifices. She did not want me to work for her, to furnish her house, support her children, to be regular at meals or to open charge accounts in luxury shops; she asked only that I should be with her from time to time. But some people are at war with the best things of life and pervert them into fantasies and dreams (p. 173).

It is evident that Moses is blind to "the best things of life" while he experiences them. Both Daisy and Sono provide him with peace and tranquility, but he does not rejoice in them because of his desire for fantasy and excitement. When Sono has pneumonia for a month, Moses does not telephone once. However, even when he fails to be with her from time to time, she still "rated him higher than kings and presidents"(p. 172).

After he has been rejected by Madeleine, he regrets what he failed to do for Sono, who has gone back to Japan long ago: "*To tell the truth, I never had it so good,* [he writes in an unmailed letter to Sono]. *But I lacked the strength of character to bear such joy*" (p. 169); he then writes "Y*ou were right about Madeleine, Sono, I shouldn't have married her. I should have married you* (167). In retrospect, Moses acknowledges, however, that he experienced a polarity of feelings in his relationship with Sono. On the one hand, he was strongly attracted to "her loving body," which he "violently desired," and, on the other hand, he was repulsed by her way of life, particularly the smells of her apartment. He also finds Sono's taste in furniture and apparel beneath his "sophisticated" upbringing:

> And Herzog thought. . . is this really possible? Have all the traditions, passions, renunciations, virtues, gems, and masterpieces of Hebrew discipline, and all the rest of it . . . brought me to these untidy green sheets, and this rippled mattress?" (p. 17).

The irony in this passage is at Moses's expense. He is aware of the "traditions. . . virtues. . . and masterpieces of Hebrew discipline," but he does not live by them. Although Sono comes from a different culture, she still belongs to an established tradition; otherwise, she would not treat him as she does. Moses, however, is oblivious to her qualities. In the end, he decides that "she didn't answer my purpose. Not serious enough" (p. 103). In fact, as an unsettled man, he finds Sono's devotion and loyalty, like Daisy's stability and order, too unchallenging for his liking. Bellow pokes fun at Herzog's naivety in his personal relationships. If "the masterpieces of Hebrew discipline" save Herzog from this sincere oriental woman, with an established tradition behind her, they ironically do nothing to correct his taste in women.

Likewise, one of the things that draws him to Ramona Donselle is her exotic background--her French Russian Argentine-Jewish ways (p. 200). However, he is not completely at ease in his interaction with her since she is in some ways similar to Sono and Daisy. She is modern in the sense that she is financially independent, but like Sono, she wants to make her man happy. Indeed, she takes Moses too seriously and places him on a pedestal. Not only does she give "him room, so to speak, in her soul, and. . . the embrace of her body"; she also supplies him with "asylum, shrimp, wine, music, flowers, [and] sympathy" (p. 199). Like Sono, she caters to his sexual and emotional needs and flatters his ego. And like Daisy, she has "genuine family feeling" (p. 153). She provides a home for her Jewish immigrant aunt. Moses is attracted to Ramona because of her beautiful body and generosity, but he is on guard against her conning him into marrying her. He understands her wish to settle down: "Ramona had Moses' complete sympathy--a woman in her thirties, successful in business, independent, but still giving such suppers to gentlemen friends. But in times like these, how should a woman steer her heart to fulfillment?" (p. 187). However, he needs her to build up his sexuality which has been badly affected by Madeleine. In fact, he insists on stressing Ramona's beauty and intelligence to convince himself that he is still attractive to extraordinary women. "His luck never entirely deserted him. Perhaps he was luckier than he knew" (p. 16). He presents Ramona as someone who sees sex as the ultimate solution to any problem. A "priestess" of love and "*a true sack artist*" (p.7), she has confidence in her "aphrodisiac power" (p. 154); she "does not believe in any sin but the sin against the body, for her the true and only temple of the spirit" (p. 151) and feels that "the art of love. . . was one of the sublime achievements of the spirit" (p. 184).

Nevertheless, although Ramona fortifies his ego, he shuns the prospect of a commitment to her. He claims that "today's asylum might be the dungeon of tomorrow" (p. 184). He decides not to go with her to Montauk for fear of turning into "the captive professor"

(p. 23). Most important, he identifies with George Hoberly, Ramona's ex-boyfriend, who, like him, suffers from a female rejection. Hoberly's pain is so intense that he attempts suicide twice. However, while "Ramona, with the accent on 'nothing,' said she felt nothing but pity for him" (179), Moses feels sympathy for Hoberly. His caution about committing himself to Ramona, even though he is preparing supper for her at the closing of the novel, originates from his previous experience with traditional women who by catering to him, introduce an element of monotony he flees from.

But the fact that Moses is fascinated by "modern women" reflects that he has not yet achieved a fully developed sense of himself because he is still caught up in faddish trends. In spite of all her efforts to please Moses, Ramona never really touches him the way Madeleine has. As she rightly tells him, he indeed looks for "domineering women" (p. 189). Moses is, in effect, intrigued with difficult women who present challenges to his ego. For him, "man and woman, gaudily disguised, like two savages belonging to hostile tribes, confront each other. The man wants to deceive, and then to disengage himself; the woman's strategy is to disarm and detain him" (pp. 187-88). This is an exaggerated cliche of male-female relationships, but it shows how Moses views his relationships with traditional women in particular. Early in the novel, Moses admits that "female arrogance" has "an immediate sexual power over him" (p. 34). His attraction to Madeleine underlines his fascination with "modern women" and marks a phase in his emotional and intellectual growth.

Moses marries Madeleine because of the challenges she represents to his manhood. As a young, independent and intelligent woman, married to an older man, Madeleine makes many demands on her husband. She is the beautiful woman whom Sandor Himmelstein, Moses's lawyer, refers to as "some dish." It means a great deal to Moses, as a middle-aged man whose hair is growing thin, to be needed by a woman who is desired by everyone. He suffers from vanity. According to René Girard, "a *vaniteux* will desire any object so long as he is convinced that it is already desired by another person whom he admires."[6]

It is surprising to note that in spite of his wide knowledge and diverse scholarship, Herzog is still prone to the levelling effects of mass culture--his fascination with Madeleine-- as he moves away from his Jewish upbringing. Indeed, he is drawn to what American society stresses, namely the importance of certain fashionable personalities, worship of stars and models. Herzog has not achieved a fully developed self that would allow him to function independently of the flow of society. This is reflected in his attachment to Madeleine despite his awareness of her faults.

Still, although the "learned professor" is attracted to Madeleine for the various challenges she represents, he treats her as a submissive Daisy, expecting her to fulfill the functions of a dedicated Jewish wife and mother. As a result, their personalities clash as each one struggles to control the other. Madeleine has serious problems before she meets Herzog, but his ignorance in knowing how to relate to her, assisted by her high expectations of him and her confusion about what she really wants in life, lead to the failure of their relatioship.

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[6] René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* . Trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961), p. 7.

Whereas Moses's perspective is informed by his Jewish heritage, Madeleine is almost free of family and traditional values. She has been brought up without the stability and affection of a family, and endured a miserable childhood. Like Verena Tarrant, Madeleine was not nurtured within a strong cultural tradition. As a result, she grows up without discipline. She complains to Herzog that "[my] childhood was a grotesque nightmare. . . . I was bullied, assaulted. . . . abused. . . . My parents damn near destroyed me" (p. 117). Her father, an impresario, who is supposed to correct her misbehavior and set an example, tells his future son-in-law when Moses meets him for the first time, "She's got more faggots at her feet than Joan of Arc" (p. 107). Like Herzog, Madeleine comes from a Jewish family; however, the only sign of Judaism is the patriarchal structure of the family. Tennie Pontritter, Madeleine's mother, sacrifices her life for her husband. "Only a Jewish woman," Herzog notes, "of a good culture-respecting background. . . could sacrifice her life to a great artist as she had done" (p. 108).

Nevertheless, lavishing all her attention on the impresario, Tennie alienates her daughter from her affections and denies her the same education she herself grew up with. Tennie confides her limitations as a parent to Moses, "[Madeleine] feels I just turned her into the world. And there's nothing *I* can do" (p. 109). Moreover, the impresario is too absorbed in his art to spare time for anyone. As a result, Madeleine grows up free from any discipline or affection, hating her father and developing deep contempt for her mother.

> 'She's such a slave!' said Madeleine [about her mother]. 'She can't let go, and neither will he. It's to his advantage. She still goes to that rotten acting school after hours and keeps his books. He's the great thing in her life--another Stanislavsky. She sacrificed herself and if he's not a great genius what was it all for! Therefore he *is* a great genius' (p. 114).

The family education is important for preserving and maintaining cultural values, but it is important to emphasize that someone "of a good culture-respecting background" like Tennie does not always succeed in teaching and inculcating the values she grows up with in her daughter. Like Verena Tarrant's mother, she is too preoccupied with abstract notions to be able to provide a stable home for her only daughter. Consequently, Madeleine rebels against her mother's blind devotion to the impresario.

In embracing Catholicism, Madeleine would like to move away from her Jewish heritage, but she exchanges one patriarchal order for another. Her conversion, however, lasts only for three months, because her loose upbringing does not train her to give allegiance to any outside authority. Monsignor Hilton, Madeleine's spiritual guide, who converts her to Catholicism, is a foil to her father. Thus, she rejects the Monsignor for the same reason she rejects her father: both are authority figures. Moreover, the whole process of conversion is merely a theatrical show. As Goldman succinctly puts it, "The theatricality that she feels has usurped her position in the family, she employs to gain entry into a surrogate family, religion."[7] But for the ambitious Madeleine, religion is not as glamorous as social climbing. She, therefore, switches to "culture--ideas--which had taken the place of the church in Mady's heart" (p. 7).

Moses meets her while she is a member in the Catholic Church searching for some meaning in her life. Emotionally and psychologically, she is undergoing a major crisis. As a new convert, she develops an ambivalent attitude towards sex. She enjoys it and at the same feels guilty about it because she has to go to confession before taking communion. She dreads facing the Monsignor and going through the process:

> She wanted him [Moses] there at night. She would even, half with rancor, take his hand and put it on her breast as they were falling asleep. But in the morning she would have liked him to disappear. And he was not used to this; he was used to being a favorite. (p. 112).

Indeed, Madeleine's and Moses's expectations of each other are incongruous with the reality of the situation. On the one hand, Madeleine understands her part in women's emancipation as mainly fulfilling every caprice she fancies without taking into consideration others' wishes, even if these others constitute a major part of her life. On the other, Moses, who is "used to being a favorite" with submissive women like Sono and Daisy, is attracted to Madeleine because she is different from that type of woman he had previously known; yet, ironically, he expects her to behave like them. What attracts him to Madeleine repulses him at the same time.

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[7] L. H. Goldman, *Saul Bellow's Moral Vision: A Critical Study for the Jewish Experience* . (Irvington Publishers, 1983), p. 138.

Like everything else in the novel, Madeleine is presented from Herzog's point of view, and since he is very angry at her, there must be a lot of exaggeration in his portrait. On the whole, she is presented as the kind of woman who longs for power. She also knows how to go about achieving it: "her image was fixed in her will" (p. 111). Madeleine strives to fulfill her wishes, and she does not care how as long as she gets what she wants.

At the outset, Moses devises a policy of peaceful resignation to counterbalance what he describes as Madeleine's "tyrannic despotism": "Meekness in exchange for preferential treatment" (p. 154). He thinks if he gives in to his beautiful wife's demands, he will eventually win her over. As he acknowledges later, "there was a flavor of subjugation in his love for Madeleine. Since she was domineering, and since he loved her, he had to accept the flavor that was given" (8). For instance, Moses remembers a dispute he has with her over her careless housekeeping and spendthrift habits; her attitude suggests inflexibility and unwillingness to accommodate:

> 'Oh, balls! So now we're going to hear how you SAVED me. Let's hear it again. What a frightened puppy I was. How I wasn't strong enough to face life. But you gave me LOVE, from your big heart, and rescued me from the priests. . .
>
> 'Madeleine!'
>
> 'Oh--shit!'
>
> 'Just think a minute.'

> 'Think? What do you know about thinking?'
>
> 'Maybe I married you to improve my mind!' said Herzog. 'I'm learning.'
>
> 'Well, I'll teach you, don't worry!' said the beautiful, pregnant Madeleine between her teeth (pp. 124-25).

Unlike Daisy and Sono, whose traditional upbringing allows them to accommodate their man and his wishes, Madeleine, who does not possess any allegiance to any outside reality, does not answer to anything except her ego. Her defiant attitude indicates her indifference about keeping her family together; she is free of family values. Nevertheless, Herzog wants to convince himself that in his relationship with his second wife, he is the one who ought to work hard to achieve a meaningful life and to communicate with her since he "was a fatherly person to Madeleine" (p. 114). In a recent interview, Bellow himself comments on Moses's limitations in dealing with his second wife : "The pussycat husband, winning his wife's affections through 'goodness,' is ludicrous; she simply cuckolds him."[8]

Madeleine, one of the "Reality Instructors,"[9] teaches Herzog a cruel side of reality. She not only deserts him for his best friend and confidant Valentine Gersbach, but also throws him out of the house for which he has signed a lease. Moreover, in anticipation of his reaction, she warns the police about him, giving them his picture so that they can arrest him should he be seen close by. Amazed at her boldness, Moses can only say: "She owed her survival to intelligence. It was part of her sickness to be shrewd" (p. 100). To his current mistress, Ramona, he explains that "Madeleine wasn't just a wife, but an education. A good, steady, hopeful, rational, diligent, dignified, childish person like Herzog who thinks human life is a subject, like any other subject, has to be taught a lesson" (p. 193).

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[8] Matthew Roudané, "An Interview with Saul Bellow," *Contemporary Literature* 25 (Fall, 1984): 269.

[9] In his interview "Saul Bellow in the Classroom," *College English* 34 (1972-73), Bellow defines "Reality Instructors" as "people who think they know the score. You don't. They are going to teach you" (p. 977); most of them are male characters; in *Herzog* , however, Madeleine is also a "Reality Instructor".

In his experience with Madeleine, Herzog lives the failure of the Jewish value system in modern America. She opens his eyes to the heated battle of the sexes which undermines the importance and stability of the family as he knows it. Herzog writes, "*will never understand what women want. What do they want? They eat green salad and drink human blood*"" (pp. 41-2); however, the tone of this passage is self-serving and melodramatic; it demonstrates that Moses does not really assume any share of the blame; he does not see himself as having been inadequate in his personal relationship. He himself is not exempt from the corruption he criticizes in Madeleine. He would like us to believe that he has been victimized by his domineering and unprincipled wife, but Madeleine too has many complaints about her ex-husband's difficult personality and his "intolerable temper which often frightened her."[10] He cannot deny Aunt Zelda's reports of Madeleine's reproaches about him: "Overbearing. . . Very demanding," and he has "to have [his] own way" (p. 38). In his total self-absorption, Moses denies Madeleine equality. For example, while endeavoring to write his ambitious project--which he has never been able to complete--he expects from his second wife the same support he got from Daisy. Madeleine, however, feels that he denies her the freedom to act as she wills. Aunt Zelda goes on to say to Moses:

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[10] This passage is from a letter by Geraldine Portnoy, Lucas Asphalter's girl friend, to Herzog in reference to how June, his daughter, has been locked up in a car while Madeleine and Gersbach have a quarrel.

> That house made a prisoner of her [Madeleine]. It must have been just dreary, washing and cooking, and to have to hush the baby, or you'd raise hell. . . . You couldn't think when June was crying, and you'd rush from your room hollering (p. 39).

This kind of treatment had already worn out the traditional Daisy, who is more patient and tolerant. Moses is faced with a problem which arises from the fact that the values he learned, and the behavior he consequently exhibits, are not workable in a society where women expect to be treated as equals. The Jewish value system, which provides stability and peace for his parents, unites them, and alleviates the hardships they encounter when they migrate to North America, proves ineffectual in Moses's relationships with women.

As a result, in his behavior in general, Herzog runs into serious contradictions. As a man, he assumes it is acceptable to have illicit relationships while still in matrimony. For example, he has various affairs during his first marriage. However, when Madeleine does exactly the same thing, his whole life collapses: "His sexual powers have been damaged" (p. 5); his intellectual work is jeopardized, and he cannot think straight: "something had come over him. He used to be able to keep going, but now he worked at about two per cent of efficiency, handled every piece of paper five or ten times and misplaced everything. It was too much! He was going under" (p. 121).

But, Moses does not learn quickly. He is still one of those "bungling child-men" (p. 226) with "an incorrigible character, doing always the same stunts, repeating the same disgraces" (p. 182). When Aunt Zelda accuses him of causing Madeleine to fall out of love with him by being reckless, dictatorial and selfish in bed, he does not deny anything; instead, "Herzog felt himself redden. A thick, hot, sick pressure filled his chest. His heart felt ill and his forehead instantly wet" (p. 39). He himself acknowledges that he forced his second wife to make love on the bathroom floor to satisfy his phallic power: "he tried to make his lust comical, to show how absurd it all was, easily the most wretched form of human struggle, the very essence of slavery" (p. 219). Thus, their relationship is based on a struggle for power. Each one is ready to fight to the death for the recognition which each fails to get from the other. After his confrontation with Aunt Zelda, he refers to himself as "a broken-down monarch of some kind. . . , like my old man, the princely immigrant and ineffectual bootlegger" (p. 39). He later reflects that,

> [h]e could be a patriarch, as every Herzog was meant to be. The family man, transmitter of life, intermediary between past and future, instrument of mysterious creation was out of fashion (p. 202).

The only major difference is that, despite his shortcomings, Father Herzog remains a monarch to his traditional and devoted wife; however, for Moses, the dream of being treated as such dies when he desires a relationship with a woman like Madeleine.

Because of his traditional background, Bellow, like Henry James, considers man as "transmitter of life, intermediary between past and future." Informed by a patriarchal system, both James and Bellow find a modern social system, where women are taking as active roles as men, upsetting. Hence, they look at modern women as inadequate wives and limited educators of future generations, especially when they attempt to interfere with man's authority.

While Herzog's general comportment is informed by his beliefs in Jewish values, Madeleine's intellectual pursuits, according to Herzog, are not geared toward self-improvement, scholastic challenges and liberal thinking, but toward acquiring the social power she is unable to achieve otherwise. Consequently, Moses classifies her as a "middlebrow" (p. 184), a term best defined by Virginia Woolf in her essay of that title:

> The middlebrow is the man, or woman, of middlebred intelligence who ambles and saunters now on this side of the hedge, now on that, in pursuit of no single object, neither art itself nor life itself, but both mixed indistinguishably, and rather nastily, with money, fame, power, or prestige.[11]

Madeleine is an illustration of this type. The only thing that Madeleine ever wants is power, and whatever she aspires to has to bring her fame and control. She uses literature to acquire social prestige. As an opportunist and "would-be aristocrat" (p. 112), she vacillates between Judaism, Christianity, and Russian intellectual history. Her obsession with Slavic literature illustrates her delight in standing out in conversations and in being the center of attention rather than her interest in knowledge. This obsession also indicates an unbalanced personality. She fails to find balance and peace in her emotional life. Her priorities are so mixed up that she does not distinguish between what is right and wrong. She lets her intense occupation with Russian literature take over other aspects of her life.

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[11] In response to J. B. Prestley's 'To a Highbrow' (BBC, 10 Oct.) and H. Nicolson's 'To a Lowbrow,' (BBC, 24 Oct), Virginia Woolf wrote "Middlebrow" which was published posthumously in *Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (London: Reader's Union, 1943), pp. 113-19.

Though she has a fierce intelligence, she misuses it. She possesses no standard of judgment, and lacks distinction of intelligence and feeling, but since she possesses "a certain theatrical genius," she manages to produce the desired effect to control her surroundings. Herzog notes in a letter to his friend Shapiro: "*She wants to live in the delirious professions as Valery calls them--trades in which the main instrument is your opinion of yourself and the raw material is your reputation or standing*" (pp. 76-77). She does not abide by the proper forces of culture which restrain and guide the ego. On the contrary, her image of herself is what inspires her behavior. Moses summarizes the opposed currents in her personality: "Ah, this Madeleine is a strange person, to be so proud but not well wiped--so beautiful but destroyed by rage--such a mixed mind of pure diamond and Woolworth glass" (p. 299).

Competing with him in his scholarly field, Madeleine threatens Moses' authority. He thinks that through her intellectual pursuits she is striving to supplant him in the realm of his strength. In a letter to her mother, for instance, Madeleine touches on the essence of their marital problems: the struggle over power. Moses reports what is in

Madeleine's letter: "First of all, she said I resembled her father in too many ways. That when we were in a room together *I* [Moses] seemed to swallow and gulp up all the air and left nothing for her to breathe" (p. 191).

The desire for power seems to characterize Moses's general attitude towards women. Except when Madeleine divorces him, he likes to have the upper hand in staying in or leaving a relationship. On the one hand, he is drawn to old-fashioned qualities in women as he knew them in his mother's devotion to her family, but, on the other hand, his desultory attitude towards his first passionless marriage resulted in his abandonment of his traditional values for the challenge and excitement of the struggle for power itself.

Unequipped to take part in the struggles for power, Herzog resorts to vengeance, a gesture which displays his frustration. While Madeleine brilliantly performs her theatrical request for a divorce, the suffering husband secretly wonders, "What if he had knocked her down, clutched her hair, dragged her screaming and fighting around the room, flogged her until her buttocks bled" (p. 10). Of course, he does not act upon this fantasy, but his aroused hatred exists and extends to anyone who is related in one way or another to his second wife. "He despised the Monsignor, wanted to murder Madeleine. Yes, he was capable of killing her. . . . He did not flinch from these criminal fantasies" (p. 155). "They [Madeleine and Gersbach] had opened the way to justifiable murder. They deserved to die. He had the right to kill them. They would even know why they were dying; no explanation necessary" (pp. 254-55).

Hence the worried and troubled father decides to shoot Madeleine and Gersbach so that he can protect his daughter from them. But when he sees Valentine, "the actual person giving an actual bath, the reality of it, the tenderness of such a buffoon to a little child, his intended violence turned into *theater*, into something ludicrous" (p. 258). When he sees his betrayers, one gently bathing his daughter and the other washing dishes, he perceives them with "a great change of heart" as human beings and no longer replicas of the child-murderers in the New York courtroom:

> I seem to think because June looks like a Herzog, she is nearer to me than to them. But how is she near to me if I have no share in her life? Those two grotesque love-actors have it all. And I apparently believe that if the child does not have a life resembling mine, educated according to the Herzog standards of 'heart,' and all the rest of it, she will fail to become a human being (p. 258).

It is ironic that when Moses embarks on his journey to shoot Madeleine and her lover, his purpose is to teach them a lesson, but his non-action shows him his inadequacy of "the Herzog standards of 'heart'" and his limitations as a parent. However, Moses's Jewish tradition, which advocates respect for human life, has influence on him. Herzog exhibits the case of an individual whose ego is restrained and controlled by the proper forces of culture. Bellow frequently makes the point that there is a "cultivated inwardness," similar to what Arnold refers to as "inward culture," which provides discipline for an individual's consciousness. Herzog illustrates this kind of "cultivated inwardness" in his action at this stage in the novel. At this point he is living by the authority of his tradition and heritage: "Ancient Herzogs with their psalms and their shawls and beards would never have touched a revolver. Violence was for the goy" (287).

Nevertheless, while the teachings of his Jewish tradition restrain him from committing this act of violence, they do not provide him with the best examples in male/female relationships in modern America. In spite of his refined taste and discerning mind, which stem from his Jewish heritage, Herzog is not clear about how he should treat an independent woman. If the family is the unity in which traditional and ethical values are to be transmitted to future generations, Herzog diminishes the relevance of this institution for the sake of fulfilling his egotistical fantasies.

Mass culture depends on the crudeness and insensitivity of people like Madeleine and Gersbach for its success . Madeleine's affair with Moses' best friend causes him extreme pain and suffering, but it also serves as a means to assess the increasing cultural authority of the mass man and the growing threat of the media to American culture. Valentine Gersbach is the incarnation of the "Mass Man." "Toward him, Bellow is merciless."[12] The novelist's harsh criticism of Gersbach is conveyed in large measure through the protagonist's bitterness about him. In a conversation with his lawyer friend Sandor Himmelstein, Herzog defines a mass man as "[a] man of the crowd. The soul of the mob. Cutting everybody down to size" (p. 86). Himmelstein himself is a mass man who degrades any ideals of human dignity by cynically maintaining that "every man is a sucker" (p. 80) and "we're all whores in this world. . . I know damn well *I'm* a whore" (p. 85). Both Gersbach and Himmelstein have little faith in human beings and little belief in ethical values which give life meaning.

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[12] Irving Howe, "Odysseus, Flat on his Back," *New Republic* (Sept. 19, 1964): 21.

Valentine exemplifies the disorder and chaos that characterize mass society. While Moses, even with his scholastic background, experiences great difficulties fathoming the complexity of life, Valentine "cut[s] every[thing] down to size." He is always ready to answer all questions. "Readiness to answer all questions is the infallible sign of stupidity" (p.155). He never admits ignorance of any matter. "He was a regular Goethe. He finished all your sentences, rephrased all your thoughts, explained everything" (p. 155). He ministers to the degeneracy of American culture by simplifying ideas so that they are easily understood by the masses, and in the process, he acquires a public identity as the spokesman of his generation.

Bellow juxtaposes Herzog' s cultural sensitivity and traditional refinement with Gersbach's lack of taste and limited imagination. As a professor and writer, Moses is a communicator; he strives to transmit his concerns with the various ideologies which are becoming commonplaces and which trivialize the individual and his sense of dignity. At the outset, his intense letter writing evokes his tempestuous mood, but in his "quarrelsomeness and baiting of great men" (p. 319), Herzog considers and weighs the relevance of the major philosophical thinkers to his well-being: "what can thoughtful people and humanists do but struggle toward suitable words? Take me, for instance. I've been writing letters helter-skelter in all directions. Perhaps I'd like to change it all into language" (p. 272). However, as a system of communication, Herzog's letter writing is ineffective when compared with Gersbach's mass communication, especially his job on the radio and television. Moses's "obscure system of idiosyncrasies" (p. 10) is beyond the masses' reach.

Through his characterization of Gersbach, Bellow demonstrates that culture is threatened by the massive infiltration of mass communication into most levels of American cultural life. Like Matthias Pardon, who "regarded the mission of mankind upon earth as a perpetual evolution of telegrams" (p.140), Valentine is a dedicated promoter of the mass media, which he uses to sell himself. Formerly, he was "a radio announcer, a disk-jockey in Pittsfield." Then, Moses finds him a job as "education director of an FM station in the Loop" (p. 6). Gersbach is still not detached enough from his Jewish tradition to be completely indifferent to it. He still retains some of his family traditions, especially in his warm relationship with his son. In his contribution to mass, he is a precursor to a type--"publicity intellectual"--Bellow develops in later novels.

In one of his articles, Bellow situates Gersbach and his types in the context of mass culture. He presents some of the degenerate manifestations of cultural life in America. He observes, for example, that "the present standard is the amusement standard"[13] , and since publicity does not depend on any particular standard, except that which brings high profits, what thrives in "this amusement society" is not art but whatever the mass-media recommend. He goes on to say that in the absence of a genuine avant-garde, literary modernism has fallen into "the hands of demagogues, dunces and businessmen. It belongs to the publicity intellectuals" (p. 177). The "publicity intellectuals" encourage degeneracy in American culture by overlooking the relevance of the past, by promoting the new, and by acquiring careers and becoming spokesmen of the new and faddish. As a result, what we have on the market is "not art but art-tinctured ideas and suggestions for the conduct or misconduct of life" ("Culture Now," p. 177).

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[13] Saul Bellow, "Culture Now: Some Animadversions, Some Laughs," *Modern Occasions* 1 (Winter, 1971): 177.

In other words, Gersbach is an example of Bellow's early treatment of the educated Philistine, who is most highly developed in later novels, especially in *The Dean's December* as Dewey Spangler, a ruthless 'arrivist' who uses people like Albert Corde, a defender of culture, to win the support of public opinion, and who uses his accumulated knowledge to advance himself. Gersbach illustrates the rise of the Mass Man in Bellow's writings.

However, Bellow clearly distinguishes between the mass man and the man on the street. His sharp criticism is directed mainly toward the Philistine intellectual who pretends to possess a set of rules and a standard of judgment, but who, in effect, advances himself by misleading the public by advancing himself. Bellow spares the common man who himself has been misinformed and manipulated by the mass man who controls the media. Bellow uses Ortega Gasset as a source for his assessment of the mass man. Like Ortega's, Bellow's criticism is directed mainly toward the "Philistine professional, the educated Mass Man," who preys on common people and exploits their innocence.[14]

Bellow also approvingly quotes D. H. Lawrence, who "believed [that] the common people of our industrial cities were like the great slave population of the ancient empires."[15] Like D.H. Lawrence and Dwight Macdonald, Bellow believes that the common people are hypnotized by the media and enslaved by its technicians who set the standards and control the market. These technicians engineer and manipulate the masses into consuming mass-produced and standardized culture, or rather "Masscult", to use Macdonald's term.[16]

It is Herzog who introduces Valentine, the man who "didn't even know how to dial a number" (p. 261), into Chicago society. Once there, he turns into a public figure, a poet, a television intellectual, lecturing at the Hadassah on Martin Buber (p. 58). Howe cogently argues that "Gersbach is a clown, a windbag, a traitor, the kind of man who makes intellectuals wish they were dead when they hear him parroting their words."[17]

Valentine is also a skillful, ruthless, and unprincipled social climber. Herzog repeatedly refers to him in terms of the chaos and disorder of the mob. "[Gersbach] looks so sugary, repulsive, poisonous, not an individual but a fragment, a piece broken off from the mob" (p. 258). Herzog then notes:

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[14] Saul Bellow, "An Interview with Myself," *New Review* (London) II: 18 (1975) : 55.

[15] Saul Bellow, "The Sealed Treasure," *The Times Literary Supplement* (July 1, 1960): 414.

[16] Dwight Macdonald, "Masscult and Midcult," *Against the American Grain* (New York, 1952).

[17] Irving Howe. "Odysseus, Flat on his Back, " p. 21.

> When I think of Valentine, I don't think of philosophy, I think of the books I devoured as a boy, on the French and Russian revolutions. . . . Anyway, I see the mobs breaking into the palaces and churches and sacking Versailles. . . . (p. 215).

Gersbach is a representative example of the triumph of the mass man in mass society. In mass society, according to Macdonald, it is difficult for people to relate to each other as individuals. This alienation forces the common man to identify with any available human quality. Consequently, the masses cling to the impersonal and abstract persona of the producer of the media.

Gersbach manufactures for himself this kind of persona in order to "[appeal] to the widest possible audience" (Macdonald, p. 8). Since he has no imagination, he is incapable of creativity. He poses as an intellectual, nibbling at ideas he does not comprehend. Much of his success in advancing in public life depends on how appealing his charismatic persona is. The "loud, flamboyant" Valentine uses his wooden leg as an asset "to enable him to find the right combination of egotism, sentimentality, opportunism, and adaptability to become 'the poet of mass communications.' "[18] Herzog says about Gersbach:

> He's a ringmaster, popularizer, liaison for the elites. He grabs up celebrities and brings them before the public. And he makes all sorts of people feel that he has exactly what they've been looking for. Subtlety for the subtle. Warmth for the warm. For the crude, crudity. For the

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[18] Forrest Read, "*Herzog* : A Review, " *Saul Bellow and the Critics* ed. Irving Malin (New York: New York University Press, 1967), p. 193.

> crooks, hypocrisy. Atrocity for the atrocious. Whatever your heart desires. Emotional plasma which can circulate in any system (p. 215).

With his chameleon-like style, which adjusts to any given situation, Valentine is a masterful trader in masscult. He not only propagates mass culture but also includes "the Built-in Reaction"[19] which helps sell masscult in huge quantities to those who are unable to have immediate experiences and so to have genuine feelings as a result.

In listening to Valentine's sentimental poetry, which he recites with its "Built-in reaction"--tears, Madeleine encourages his bad taste and promotes masscult. "Bad art and vice hand in hand. . . . Sentiment and brutality--never one without the other, like fossils and oil," comments Moses when he hears from June of her mother's collaboration in bad art. Obsessed with their self-importance, Gersbach and Madeleine are blind to the lack of genuineness in each other. Thus, it should not be surprising that they end together in a liaison. Moses feels that they deserve one another: "They have a right to each other; they seem to belong together" (p. 220).

It is important to note that Moses implicitly makes an interesting connection between Valentine and Aleck/Alice, the bisexual prostitute. At a New York courthouse, Moses witnesses a number of trials which affect him in different ways. The trial of the bisexual prostitute disrupts his self-composure and wakes him up to reality.

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[19] Macdonald defines the "Built-in Reaction" as a system which "predigests art for the spectator and spares him effort, provides him with a shortcut to the pleasures of art that detours what is necessarily difficult in the genuine art--because it includes the spectator's reactions in the work itself instead of forcing him to make his own responses" (p. 29).

Aleck/Alice suffers the loss of his unique identity as a human being in twentieth century America. He is on trial for an attempted robbery, and when asked about his name, he reveals his dismissal of a system which reduces his human qualities to a marketable commodity.

> 'Well, which are you, a boy or a girl?'
>
> The cold voice said, 'It depends what people want me for. Some want a boy, and others a girl.'
>
> 'Want what?'
>
> 'Want sex, your honor.'
>
> 'Well, what's your boy's name?'
>
> 'Aleck, your honor. Otherwise I'm Alice' (p. 228).

With his green shirt, dyed hair, lined face, empty smile, and high-pitched voice, the bisexual prostitute is a comic representation of the urban world. He illustrates one of the cheapest forms of sexual ideologies that permeate modern America. As Rodrigues argues, "the dream actor" ridicules the horrendous reality which surrounds him. With his recklessly comical attitude, he arrogantly dismisses any social pressure upon him.[20] Bellow summarizes Aleck/Alice as follows: "He seemed to be giving the world comedy for comedy, joke for joke" (p. 229).

In his rebellious behavior, Aleck/Alice comically expresses his contempt for modern society which has reduced his potential as a human being. His comic demeanor is a minimal but significant counteraction to the pressing forces of the city which deprives its inhabitants of human perceptions. Moses summarizes Aleck/Alice's attitude as follows: "with his bad fantasy he defied a bad reality, subliminally asserting to the magistrate, 'Your authority and my degeneracy are one and the same.' Yes, it must be something like that, Herzog decided" (p. 229).

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[20] Eusebio L. Rodrigues, *Quest for the Human: An Exploration of Saul Bellow's Fiction* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981), p. 191.

Bellow does not provide an explicit association between Gersbach and Aleck/Alice, but there is a clear parallel in Moses's thoughts. As he watches the bisexual on trial, he notes to himself, "Oh, these actors! thought Moses. Actors all!" (p. 228). Moses frequently underlines Gersbach and Madeleine's theatricality and love for melodrama. Thus, what Aleck/Alice, "a dream actor," has in common with these two "grotesque love actors" (p. 258) is his belief in "bad fantasy" (p. 229). Both Aleck/Alice and Gersbach seem to sell different merchandise, but when examined closely, the bisexual prostitute, whose "face [is] illusionless, without need of hypocrisy" (p. 229), knows exactly what he sells, himself. It is clear, then, that Aleck/Alice, who deals openly with his own body, answering others' demands of him, is a grotesque exaggeration of what Gersbach stands for. Gersbach merely provides what is in demand; he uses others' ideas as mere commodities. "With pinochle players he plays pinochle, with rabbis it's Martin Buber, with the Hyde Park Madrigal Society he sings madrigals" (p. 217).

Aleck/Alice epitomizes the sexual ambiguity which increasingly becomes a part of the broad social confusion that is so prevalent in modern cities. In limiting his identity to a mere sex object, he evokes the spirit of the age and its fascination with sex; this fascination is a part of the widespread ideology that poses a threat to culture.

In a recent interview, Bellow argues that "we have no thought control yet, but we do have received opinion. It comes from universities, journalism, television, psychiatry, among other places. It is self-perpetuating."[21] This statement brings to mind Flaubert's view about what he himself calls "received" or "accepted ideas." In a letter to George Sand (1871), he writes, "All our trouble comes from our gigantic ignorance. . . . When shall we get over empty speculation and accepted ideas? What should be studied is believed without discussion. Instead of examining, people pontificate."[22]

In the twentieth century, sex becomes one of the most popular topics that dominates mass communication, especially the press and television. Theorizing about sex is a part of the wider ideologies and received opinions which flourish in modern time. While Aleck/Alice follows the fashion of his time by offering himself to whatever is required of him, Ramona interprets her surrounding in terms of sexual bliss. She is a sophisticated and intelligent woman, but she falls under the influence of a sexual ideology that grows widespread in American society. Though she is independent and capable, her obsession with sex and its prevalence makes her a slave rather than an emancipated and free woman. In an interview, Bellow justifies the caution his protagonist shows in his dealings with Ramona:

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[21] D. J. R. Bruckner, "A Candid Talk with Saul Bellow, " *The New York Times Magazine* (15 April, 1984): 54.

[22] Gustave Flaubert, *The Dictionary of Accepted Ideas* , Trans. Jacques Barzun (New York: A New Directions Book, 1954), p. 7.

> Ramona is nice, an awfully nice girl. She is the good-hearted (and she is good-hearted), giving, charitable, but ideological female. She is an ideologist. She makes speeches. She thinks what's best for Moses. . . . He's going to forgive her all this ideological stuff. It is a matter of forgiving, because he has no use for it. He's gotten rid of his own. And why should he consent to listen to hers?[23]

While it is true that Ramona preaches sex as the absolute cure for all misery, a cure Moses enjoys, he himself is not exempt from ideology. As he tells his brother Will when he inquires about his reasons for marrying Madeleine, "She seems to have filled a special need. . . . A very special need. I don't know what. She brought ideology into my life. Something to do with catastrophe. After all, it's an ideological age" (p. 334). Despite the flippancy in tone of the last two sentences, Herzog, whose discerning sensibility enables him to discriminate fine differences, becomes entangled in Madeleine's ideology. But once he frees himself of his passion for Madeleine, he also frees himself of ideology.

The threat to American culture is present in the increasing influence of the media, which help to popularize faddish notions, especially in the city; the inhabitants of urban environments are hypnotized and enslaved by the overwhelming mass of information. In James's world, the characters are shielded by James's consciousness from the taxing realities of American cities; in Bellow's novel, however, Moses's already burdened sensibility suffers from the general turmoil which characterizes his environment. Most of the action in *Herzog* is located in urban conglomerations where industrialization causes overwhelming changes and dictates a certain way of life. In his quest for self-realization, Moses strives to achieve some understanding of his existence as a man.

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[23] Jo Brans, "Common Needs, Common Preoccupations: An Interview with Saul Bellow," *Southwest Review* 62 (1977): 19.

> In a city. In a century. In transition. In a mass. Transformed by science. Under organized power. Subject to tremendous controls. In a condition caused by mechanization. After the late failure of radical hopes. In a society that was no community and devalued the person. Owing to the multiplied power of numbers which made the self negligible. Which spent military billions against foreign enemies but would not pay for order at home. Which permitted savagery and barbarism in its own great cities (p. 201).

Bellow provides a depiction of the city and its damaging effects on the human psyche. The congested city streets evoke malaise and press on the individual. Herzog is unable to come to terms with his urban environment because it generates confusion in him. With its noise and clutter, the city weighs heavily on his consciousness. Once he is exposed to the harsh reality of New York, his agitation increases and his thoughts start "shooting all over the place" (p. 13).

> In the crowds of Grand Central Station, Herzog in spite of all his efforts to do what was best could not remain rational. He felt it all slipping away from him in the subterranean roar of engines, voices, and feet and in the galleries with lights like drops of fat in yellow broth and

> the strong suffocating fragrance of underground New York (p. 33).

One of the novel's main concerns is the fact that a city environment creates impersonal feelings among its inhabitants. As a result, people are unable to get to know each other on a personal level. At the center of some of Bellow's novels, the city's decadence is translated into a violent scene which emblematizes the traits of savagery and estrangement of some urban dwellers. In *Herzog* , the child-murder scene is the ultimate example of the crisis of dissolution and the disintegration of moral feelings among the masses. Just as Moses, as a child, had been assaulted and could have been killed by a stranger, the boy in the novel is actually killed. His emotionally unbalanced mother violently murders her three-year old boy whom she "could not toilet train" while her lover is lying silently on the bed. Shaken by the gory details of the incident, Moses "felt stifled, as if the valves of his heart were not closing and the blood were going back to his lungs" (p. 239), and "in trying to speak [he] discovered an acrid fluid in his mouth that had to be swallowed" (p. 239). He describes the impact of the experience on his consciousness as follows:

> he concentrates. With all his might--mind and heart--he tried to obtain something for the murdered child. But what? How? He pressed himself with intensity, but 'all his might' could get nothing for the buried boy. Herzog experienced nothing but his own *human feelings* , in which he found nothing of use. What if he felt moved to cry? or pray? He pressed hand to hand. And what did he

> feel? Why he felt himself--his trembling hands, and eyes that stung. And what was there in modern, . . . post-Christian America to pray for? Justice--justice and mercy? And pray away the monstrousness of life, the wicked dream it was? He opened his mouth to relieve the pressure he felt. He was wrung, and wrung, and wrung again, again (p. 240).

Indeed, this violent scene of the child-murder is crucial to the understanding of the novel as an interpretation of twentieth century modern society. It underlines the dehumanization of the masses. The degeneracy of American culture becomes palpable in a mass society where people are unable to relate to each other; they are pressured by the urban forces and are reduced in Macdonald's terms to "inchoate and uncreative" atoms. But this scene also serves as a catharsis for Herzog to examine his life; he recognizes that his anxiety occurs within the safe boundaries of his middle class life.

The milieu which allows for this kind of violence against helpless children undercuts human dignity. By stripping the individual of his character and reducing him to a mass-produced item, mass society creates an instrument which acts irresponsibly. Violence results, in large measure, not just from the impersonal impact of the city on its inhabitants, but also from the incongruity which grows between being and inner-being. Consequently, lacking respect for human life and overlooking its unfathomable and mystical quality, they can easily destroy it.

The value system which James describes in *The Europeans* , and which used to bond the members of the same community together, deteriorates rapidly in Bellow's time. In fact, there is a growing rejection of loyalties which inform people's behavior. The validity of most common cultural values has become questionable. As result, life presents itself to the masses as exempt from any restriction. Since almost everything grows permissible, it is difficult to know how far one can go.

Although Bellow is aware of the state of American culture, he still argues that amid this modern degeneracy, the power of the human imagination "should reveal the greatness of man." Despite the decadence that presses on the individual and paralyzes the creativity of the imagination, Bellow maintains that "there is no limit to what an individual can do." He repeatedly makes a point of dissociating himself from modern writers who resignedly conclude that

> modern mass society is frightful, brutal, hostile to whatever is pure in the human spirit, a wasteland and a horror. To its ugliness, its bureaucratic regiments, its thefts, its lies, its wars, and its cruelties, the artist can never be reconciled.[24]

Bellow rejects this wasteland outlook that is predominant in modern writing, arguing that for a long time "literature has lived uncritically" on this theory of doom without fully looking into other possibilities. He suggests that "it is the task of artists and critics in every generation to look with their own eyes" ("Thinking Man," p. 20).

In *Herzog* Saul Bellow endeavors to interpret the contemporary world from an angle different from the wasteland outlook. After an insightful consideration of major Western philosophical ideas, including those of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, Herzog comes to the simple, but, he implies, forgotten conclusion that what makes life worth living is the "useful contact" man establishes with others as opposed to the blind absorption in one's selfish concerns. To his closest friend Lucas Asphalter, Herzog confides that "the real essential question is one of our employment by other human beings and their employment by us" (p. 282). The effectiveness of this approach in the face of the crisis is minimal, but at least it allows someone who is as disillusioned as Herzog to choose life over death.

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[24] Saul Bellow, "The Thinking Man's Waste Land, " *Saturday Review* 48 (3 April, 1965): 20.

Herzog strives to live "the inspired condition", a state of consciousness that allows him "to know truth, to be free, to love another, to consummate existence, to abide with death in clarity of consciousness" (165). He repeatedly detaches himself from the enemies of life who love apocalypse too much. To his friend Shapiro, Moses writes , vehemently resisting this bleak outlook on life:

> Is this the full crisis of dissolution? Has the filthy moment come when moral feeling dies, conscience disintegrates, and respect for liberty, law, public decency, all the rest, collapses in cowardice, decadence, blood?. . . The canned sauerkraut of Spengler's "Prussian Socialism," the commonplaces of the Wasteland outlook, the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation. . . I can't accept this foolish dreariness. We are talking about the whole life of mankind. The subject is too great, too deep for such weakness, cowardice--too deep, too great (pp. 74-75).

However, in his effort to live "the inspired condition" and to search for "good sense, clarity, [and] truth," (28) Moses lends himself to criticism. He is deeply rooted in the Jewish culture and in strong affiliation with a tradition which allows him a definite sense of identity. However, in spite of his cultural background and discerning sensibility, his relationships with women demonstrate some limitations in his character. Both Daisy and Sono conduct themselves following their established heritage, but while Moses takes for granted Daisy's Jewish European heritage, he completely misses Sono's Oriental culture.[25] In giving up the stability of his first marriage and the steadiness of his relationship with his Japanese mistress for the excitement of a shaky and uncertain experience with Madeleine, Moses overlooks the significance of his family background and the relevance of the Jewish tradition.

Madeleine, who is free of family and cultural values, wins out. This is an indication of the state of modern degeneracy. It is significant to note that while James is able to portray an undisciplined Verena Tarrant, who can be still guided and trained by Basil Ransom, Bellow illustrates the pressing situation of American culture by allowing Madeleine the ability to fulfill her egotistical wishes which do not take into consideration any outside reality.

The outcomes of the changes in modern society reveal themselves particularly in the destruction of family unity, the confusion of the roles of the sexes, and the deterioration of the common value system. The disintegration of the family has a damaging impact on the individual. Moses, however, is aware of the degenerate manifestations of cultural life in America, which reveal themselves in many forms--the growing authority of the "Mass Man," the negative influence of publicity on culture, and the increasing power of the "publicity intellectuals." Still Bellow does not provide a clear alternative to the "Mass Man " in Herzog. Herzog is educated and sophisticated, but he is too wrapped up in his personal problems to take a clear stand on culture. In fact, he consciously contributes to the dislocation of the values he grows up with. Moreover, there is no specific indication about how Moses relates to American culture, and how he intends to put into practise within society the resolutions he achieves. In the end his private life is important for his inner stability, which overrides his cultural preoccupations. The novel ends with no clear reconciliation between the inescapable forces of mass culture and the individual.

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[25] In Bellow as in James, an established tradition is usually tied in to European culture.

V. "Sexual Madness" in New York

As the title of the novel indicates, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* focuses on Sammler's endeavor to be "a meditative island on the island of Manhattan."[1] Unlike Herzog, who, in spite of the pain and suffering he experiences in his second marriage, is still charmed by women and warmed by their companionship, Sammler, at seventy-two years of age, is preoccupied with broader concerns such as making sense of life, getting the proper historical perspective on himself, and defining his place vis-à-vis other human beings within the spectrum of contemporary America. He prefers to speculate about these and other issues in the isolation of his New York apartment. However, attracted by his charming personality and polite manners, a group of acquaintances and relatives constantly force their presence on his privacy. Although some see him as judge and priest (p. 86) and others as a guru (p. 36), these people are what Bellow describes in *Herzog* as "reality instructors" who force Sammler into seeing the unpleasant side of reality. Because he has a rich background, Sammler carries out some of Bellow's views; however, he detaches himself from his protagonist because Sammler's experiences in the war affect his judgment, and the fact that he possesses only one good eye suggests that his point of view is limited.

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[1] Saul Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970),p. 72. Hereafter, references to the book will be included in parentheses within the text.

Through Sammler's keen and observant eye, Bellow provides a critique of American society and presents the multiple challenges men have to face in the modern age. Sammler is placed in the largest city of the United States, recording the various forms of New York's madness, and its effects on the individual as well as on culture. Many aspects of American life offend Sammler's fine sensibility. He is mainly concerned with "the disaster that befell authority": parental, religious and traditional forms of authority (p. 41). The death of Dr. Gruner saddens him, but allows him insights into himself. He becomes aware of the pressures and distractions of American city life, which contribute to the disintegration and degeneracy of American cultural life. He is overwhelmed by the various forms of madness that permeate the American scene. From his apartment on the West Side, where he "seeks sanctuary in what corners of culture" he can find,[2] he observes the confusion of the modern conglomeration. New York forces itself and its dreadful reality on Sammler's "delicate recording system". His predicament is having to learn "to live with disintegration, with crazy streets, filthy nightmares, monstrosities come to life, addicts, drunkards, and perverts celebrating their despair openly in midtown" (p. 70). Indeed, he gathers enough evidence to ask himself, "is our species crazy?" Repulsed by New York's cacophony, its smell, and the madness of its inhabitants, Sammler believes that "the place of honor [is] outside" of society (p. 69).

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[2] Saul Bellow, "Starting Out in Chicago," *The American Scholar* 44(1974): 77.

In this chapter, I will try to show that the drastic changes which occur in family unity reflect the social changes in modern society. In *Mr. Sammler's Planet* , Bellow depicts various family relationships, such as a father/daughter relationship, but none can be considered as a stable and complete unity which allows its members emotional stability and psychological growth. Sammler's relationships with his only daughter and with his relatives, especially Wallace Gruner open his eyes to the disintegration of the self in the modern age; they also demonstrate Sammler's failure as a family member. Secondly, I will demonstrate that since in a mass society people are not attached to life by a culture which unites them through the highest values and since they are incapable of relating to each other as individuals, they are drawn to what Sammler describes as the "sexual madness" that overwhelms the Western world (p. 63). In his brief encounters with Columbia University students and the black pickpocket and in his relationship with Walter Bruch and Angela Gruner, Sammler gains insight into the widespread absorption with sexual ideology. I will then go on to show that whereas a discerning sensibility, like Sammler's, struggles to define itself in relation to others despite the pressures of the urban environment, the "publicity intellectual," who embodies the imprisonment within self, uses his knowledge to advance himself while exploiting modern consciousness. I will continue by showing how Bellow, in directly exposing Sammler's fine sensibility to the crudeness and chaos of New York, gives an assessment of American urban environment; New York enhances the explosion of mass culture. Finally, I will argue that despite the reality of mass society, Bellow still believes that there are possibilities which give meaning to life. Sammler's esteem for his nephew, Dr. Elya Gruner, his respect for his distant cousin, the late Ussher Arkin, and his liking for Dr. Govinda Lal, the Hindu biophysicist, qualify his bleak outlook on the American way of life.

Family does not always provide protection from the pressing changes of the modern age. In this novel, the disintegration of the family mirrors the disorder and chaos of the kind of society we live in. Absence of family feelings results in and accentuates the loss of inner stability; consequently, people are so overwhelmed by the pressing forces of mass society that they are unable to know their real selves. The relationships depicted in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* become extensions of the degeneracy of a whole way of life. Sammler's relationship with his daughter, for example, is superficial because they live in two different worlds.

Indeed, Shula, a "reality instructor," hardly has a close relationship with anyone. Unlike "reality instructors" in *Herzog* , she does not plan to teach her father, but in spite of his knowledge, she shows him a reality about himself. Rootless in New York, she drifts "passionately collecting things" (p. 23). To her father, she is a scavenger. With her wig, shopping bag and eccentric apparel, she becomes a part of the chaos of her environment. "The full effect would have been no worse than vulgar if she had not been obviously a nut" (p. 24).

Despite her oddities, Shula is altruistic in her nutty endeavors. She is determined to implicate her father, bring him back from his seclusion, and share with him what she considers his most ambitious project. In her "single-minded, persistent, prosecuting, horrible-comical obsession" (p. 50) to help him write H.G. Wells's memoirs, she becomes comical. Shula resembles Selah Tarrant, who wants his daughter publicized and advertised, especially because he thinks that he plays a significant role in inspiring her to talk publicly. Shula, too, wishes to see her father's pictures in the bookshops (p. 179), since she always wants to be a part of his project. Like Madeleine, she is a collector of ideas which she cannot assimilate. Like Madeleine, Shula also switches from Judaism to Catholicism depending on the season. "Almost always at Easter she was a Catholic. Ash Wednesday was observed and it was with a smudge between the eyes" (p. 25).

In her blind compulsion to be part of her father's work, she does not exclude illegal means. She steals Dr. Govinda Lal's only manuscript, "The Future of the Moon," on which he has spent three years. She wishes to help her father's research and bring him up to date. She is emotionally attached to the peaceful time the Sammlers spent in London before the outbreak of war. Sammler acknowledges her devotion to culture:

> She might creep down on her knees and pray like a Christian; she might pull that on her father; she might crawl into dark confession boxes; she might run to Father Robles and invoke Christian protection against his Jewish anger; but in her nutty devotion to culture she couldn't have been more Jewish (p. 181).

Nevertheless, for Shula culture is not, as it is for Matthew Arnold, "the very principle of the authority"[3] to counteract the impulse of anarchy, but, rather a means to collect and to add more to her already chaotic and cluttered mind. Culture, according to her father's view, does not provide her with order and peace. She uses culture, as she uses religion, for the wrong purposes:

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[3] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* , ed. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 85.

> Shula, like all the ladies perhaps, was needy--needed gratification of numerous instincts, needed the warmth and pressure of men, needed a child for sucking and nurture, needed female emancipation, needed the exercise of the mind, needed continuity, needed interest--interest!--needed flattery, needed triumph, power, needed rabbis, needed priests, needed fuel for all that was perverse and crazy, needed noble action of the intellect, needed culture, demanded the sublime (p. 35).

Thus, it is not surprising that Shula steals Dr. Lal's manuscript. When her father confronts her about her theft, she argues that "a creative person wouldn't stop at anything. For the creative mind there are no crimes" (p. 182). He is appalled at her misdeed, especially as it implicates him directly. She is as much a criminal as the pickpocket; her father compares her to the black man twice (pp. 149, 160). Sammler suggests that crime is not limited to New York streets only; it permeates various aspects of the urban milieux. He is sorry that "he and Antonia had not blended better" (p. 107). This statement, however, suggests Sammler's self-concern rather than his acknowledgement of any failure as a father in his daughter's education. Most important, he is self-righteously angry that he has to explain his "unhinged, wavering-witted daughter" to Dr. Lal (p. 181).

Like Basil Ransom, Sammler believes that a woman is predisposed to wrongdoing: "what could one do for a woman? Little, very little" (p. 204). Unless, of course, she is properly guided by a man: "Here magical powers must help, assuage, console, and for a woman, those marvelous powers so often are the powers of a man" (p. 180). In effect, this statement evokes a sense of self-congratulation on Sammler's part for being male, as if this gender were totally exempt from any possible wrongdoing. However, as a child, Shula did not have her father's attention and time. Sammler himself admits at the end of the novel that he had been "too delicate for earthy life, too absorbed in unshared universals" (p. 181). Absorbed in the abstract, Sammler has neglected his "only contribution to the continuation of the species" (p. 107). Bellow pokes fun at his protagonist for priding himself on his rationality and keen perception while he neglects his only offspring. Sammler is made to shoulder some of his duties when he is forced to explain his daughter's "extravagance, . . . animal histrionics, . . . goofy business with shopping bags, trash-basket neuroses" (p. 181). To Dr. Lal, he provides the reassurance that he will step in to correct her behavior. "Try not to be too anxious, sir. I can recover your manuscript, and will do it tonight. I don't use my authority often enough. . . . I can control my daughter, and I shall" (p. 161).

As a "reality instructor," Shula teaches her father that, in spite of his wide knowledge and diverse intellectual pursuits, he does not know his daughter. She reveals a side of her personality he has never known to exist before. All along, he easily dismisses her as a simple lunatic with no self-awareness and no ability to relate to others. Yet, during their last phone conversation, she surprises him when she tells him that if she keeps the money which Gruner received from the Mafia and hid in a hassock, she will be able to attract someone. Up to that point, Sammler never knew that "wig, scavenging, shopping bags, were to an extent deliberate" (p. 282).

While Sammler admits to a change of attitude toward his daughter, Shula remains the most eccentric and lonely woman in the novel. Absorbed in his intellectual pursuits, "with his condensed views, [e]liminating the superfluous, [i]dentifying the necessary" (p. 254), Sammler ignores his only dependent, who is as alienated in New York as he is. He dismisses her as he does others like Margotte because he views them simply as intruders or entertainers "in the great funfair" (p. 268). At the end of the novel, however, he wishes to make amends to Shula. For the first time, he shows her that he really appreciates her: "You're a good daughter. The best of any. No better daughter," (p. 283) he tells her after she consents not to spend Gruner's mafia money upon Sammler's recommendation. However, this statement serves more to alleviate his guilt about failing to be a good father than to indicate a genuine change of attitude toward Shula.

Sammler's relationship with his daughter is informed by his conservative Jewish heritage. Like Herzog, Sammler does not consider woman an equal. While it is evident that Shula and other women in the novel invite Sammler's criticism, he does not accept them as capable of being equal partners, especially in his intellectual pursuits.

Sammler's conservative views of women inform his relationships with other women as well. His relationship with Margotte Arkin qualifies Sammler's perception, but she does not succeed in drastically altering his views of women. He acknowledges and appreciates her family feeling since she opens her house to Sammler, who is remotely related to her by marriage. But he sees her only as someone who propagates fashionable ideology, "a first-class device as long as someone aimed her in the right direction" (p. 19). Like James's Miss Birdseye in *The Bostonians* , she lacks discrimination, especially in her theorizing. "She was boundlessly, achingly, hopelessly on the right side, the best side, of every big human question" (p. 22). Moreover, he thinks that like his daughter, Margotte lacks taste: "She gathered waste and junk in the flat, she bred junk" (p. 23).

Sammler particularly admires the late Ussher Arkin because he knows how to handle his wife. It is understood that only Arkin with his "good subtle brain" (p. 19) and the "minutely observant" (p. 15) Sammler are capable of rational and progressive thinking, whereas Margotte and others like her cannot comprehend their abstract thinking. Sammler views her merely as a well-meaning person who tries to make him feel at ease in her house, and he mainly considers her "a bothersome creature, willing, cheerful, purposeful, maladroit" (p. 20) who makes "cruel inroads" (p. 23) in his time with her dramatic stories.

However, it seems to me that Margotte deserves more credit than Sammler or Bellow gives her. Like him, she is a foreigner in the United States, yet she is a capable person of tremendous inner strength since she manages to adjust to her loneliness in the city. And as Sammler himself admits, she is still loyal to her husband's memory even three years after his death. A childless widow, she needs someone to relate to, which is probably the reason she invites Sammler to live with her. But he seems to see her only as someone who is unable to deal with subtle and sophisticated intellectual ideas. He ignores her qualities as a warm, considerate, reliable person he can turn to in times of need.

Bellow's critique of American culture is presented through Sammler's interactions with others. Sammler is always prepared to expect the worst. He seems to look for, find, and dwell on the inevitable flaws in most people he meets. His disagreeable attitude is revealed in his judgmental views about youth, and especially his total dismissal of the females with whom he comes in contact. Throughout the novel, he is hostile toward women; his remarks about female students Shula hires to read for him, are especially offensive and shocking:

> Females were naturally more prone to grossness, had more smells, needed more washing, clipping, binding, pruning, grooming, perfuming and *training* . These poor kids may have resolved to stink together in defiance of a corrupt tradition built on neurosis and falsehood, but Mr. Sammler thought that an unforeseen result of their way of life was loss of femininity, of self-esteem. In their revulsion from authority they would respect no persons. Not even their own persons (p. 37; my emphasis).

The Jewish value system which used to keep its members closely bound to each other and to insist on family unity within which individuals could achieve self-fulfillment loses its effectiveness in the modern United States. Consequently, people like Wallace Gruner, who are not deeply rooted in any particular tradition, are alienated and burdened by the unrestrained liberty American democracy provides for individuals because they are unable to handle their freedom responsibly.

Indeed, Wallace typifies the ultimate loss of the self in the debris of modernization. He is incapable of finding himself. In this confusion, he invokes the breakdown of the modern American system which lacks tradition and values which define culture. Endowed with unearned wealth and natural talents, he is never able to realize his human potential. Like Angela, he takes his father's money for granted and squanders it aimlessly. Since, as he himself correctly puts it, "everything just goes on being possible" (p. 223), he keeps on experimenting with life. As a perpetual child, Wallace lives mainly to gratify his diverse caprices. To Sammler, he remains a lost child. He does not hesitate to fulfill any fancy that occurs to his mind. As a result, he unknowingly ridicules *l' élan vital* of democracy which allows for immense possibilities for any individual. Making his abortive attempts at self-realization, he swings from one endeavor to another, following the whims of his imagination:

> Wallace nearly became a physicist, he nearly became a mathematician, nearly a lawyer (he had even passed the bar and opened an office, once), nearly an engineer, nearly a Ph.D. in behavioral science. He was a licensed

> pilot. Nearly an alcoholic, nearly a homosexual. At present he seemed to be a handicapper (p. 83).

Wallace is incapable of relating to others. He is too absorbed in his own world to be able to reckon with any outside reality. His preoccupation is to constantly look for excitement. In the three-day span of the novel, he floods the house looking for money his father earned from the Mafia; he flies a Cessna, makes a crash landing, damages the roof of a house, and wrecks the plane. Sammler has reason to wonder whether Wallace "was genuinely loony. For him it required a powerful effort to become interested in common events. This was possibly why sporting statistics cast him into such a fever, why so often he seemed to be in outer space. *Dans la lune* " (pp. 87-88).

In Sammler's classification, Wallace belongs in Shula's category. According to Sammler, both his daughter and his nephew are "lunatics" (p. 243), who are allowed to function in society as if they were normal people with rights to be whatever they want to. Since they are not aware of who they are, they cast themselves into chaos, "hoping to adhere to higher consciousness" (p. 137). As a result, they add to the already prevalent insanity. Indeed, Sammler is appalled by the realization that Shula, Wallace, and others like them not only are unable to handle their freedom but are given the whole responsibility of individualism without having to fight to earn it. "Hearts that get no real wage, souls that find no nourishment. Falsehoods, unlimited. Desire, unlimited. Possibility, unlimited. Impossible demands upon complex realities, unlimited" (pp. 208-09).

As an early critic of American democracy, De Tocqueville serves as a source for other cultural critics. Bellow refers to De Tocqueville, who underlines the fascination with the self in American democracy: "De Tocqueville observed that in a democracy ordinary people wished primarily to view themselves and that the citizen of a democratic country would find nothing more fascinating than--himself."[4] While talking to his uncle about his father, Wallace shows contempt and disrespect. He even compares his father to a dog, and when Sammler reprimands Wallace for his contempt, he simply declares, "I'm a different generation. I never had any dignity to start with" (p. 220). In this respect, he is a mass man; like Sandor Himmelstein, he does not believe in any positive values relevant to human beings. Indeed, this sweeping declaration reveals an easy dismissal of human dignity rather than acknowledgement of his own shortcomings.

In his aimless drifting, Wallace does not rebel against any specific authority. On the contrary, he merely follows the popular trends which emerged in the United States of America in the sixties. For example, he wishes to examine "backward" people in North Africa and Europe, but he has been taken in by them. He volunteers for the domestic Peace Corps, but faints while watching *The Birth of a Child* . He has nothing but scorn for his father's money, yet he has no inhibition spending it. Indeed, his radical manoeuvres show a confused young man who cannot come to terms with reality nor come to grips with the impending death of his father. In a general statement, Dr. Lal indirectly but succinctly summarizes Wallace's plight: "to desire to live without order is to desire to turn from the fundamental biological governing principle" (p. 197). In effect, Wallace disregards and turns away from order; there is no governing principle in his way of life.

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[4] Saul Bellow, "Culture Now: Some Animadversions, Some Laughs," *Modern Occasions* 1(Winter, 1971): 170.

Although they come from Jewish families, Wallace and Shula are not embedded in any tradition. They possess no stable principles or communal values. They live without a purpose in life and without a dream to fulfill. Most important, neither one has any dependents or family feelings. Without a sense of belonging, they epitomize the spirit of chaos that characterizes mass society, where the uniqueness of the self gives way to "the modern individuality boom" (p. 213).

Sammler traces the rapid liberation into individuality among the masses who used to be controlled by a ruling class to a recent time. "After long epochs of nameless and bitter obscurity" (p. 214), the majority surge into a freedom they cannot handle responsibly. The implication is that the true meaning of individuality has lost its nuances, especially as it has been misinterpreted and pushed to extremes: "It is right that we should dislike contrived individuality, bad pastiche, banality. . . It is repulsive. Individualism is of no interest whatever if it does not extend truth" (p. 214). Consequently,

> human beings, when they have room, when they have liberty and are supplied also with ideas, mythologize themselves. They legendize. They expand by imagination and try to rise above the limitations of the ordinary forms of common life (p. 135).

This obsession with rising above the ordinary reveals itself to Sammler as he walks on Broadway. Absorbed with trying to stand out from their environment, the crowd confirm Sammler's suspicion about the social anarchy which is prevalent in New York City.

> All human types reproduced, the barbarian, redskin, or Fiji, the dandy, the buffalo hunter, the desperado, the queer, the sexual fantasist, the squaw; bluestocking, princess, poet, painter, prospector, troubadour, guerilla, Che Guevara, the new Thomas a Becket. Not imitated are the businessman, the soldier, the priest, and the square (p. 135).

To counteract this madness, Sammler proposes that people should accept "intermediacy and representation"; they should "imitate good things" and emulate "higher representations" (p. 137). The individual will be imprisoned by his ordinary self if he strives for greatness through false originality. Most important, "an *interesting* life is the supreme concept of dullards" (209). James, too, advocated emulation of the best examples. In *The Europeans*, for example, Gertrude is so charmed by "the mysterious impressiveness of Eugenia's personality" (p. 189) that she would like to use her as a model. She does not subscribe to the concept of originality which Mr. Sammler finds misconceived in American society, especially in the 1960s. In an interview, Bellow supports and expands on his protagonist's suggestion:

> I mean . . . to construct an argument against the absurd ideas of originality which belong to the Romantic tradition. As if every individual had to re-invent himself

> and everything that surrounded him in an original way. As if to live were an act of genius, as though we had no resemblance whatever to people who preceded us. . . . After all, that's what Don Quixote is about . . . . [Quixote] did it . . . in the light of a great tradition. And he says, in so many words, that the individual has to learn greatness from others, to which he will add a quality of his own.[5]

In the past, the family played a crucial role in its members' education; it provided not just emotional support and psychological equanimity but also the best examples to emulate. However, with the swift changes of modern times, the family inevitably becomes a part of transformation. Through Sammler's perceptive eye, Bellow provides an insightful assessment of the effects of the disintegration of the family on people. But, while Sammler rightly relates one of the sources of, for instance, Wallace's and Shula's emotional instability and loss of identity to the disruption of family unity, he overlooks his own deep involvement in the breakdown of such a basic institution. As a father, educator and concerned intellectual critic, Sammler fails to pass the dominant values on to his daughter and other members of his family, even when he is aware of their inner instability.

The obsession to cultivate a false self in mass society takes other forms as well. "All this theater of the soul" (p. 213), as Sammler depicts the preoccupation with striving to be original, can be discerned in other aspects of cultural disintegration, especially in the novel's most prevalent craze, sexual madness. Through his interaction with Columbia University students, the black pickpocket, Walter Bruch, and Angela Gruner, Sammler becomes aware of the prevalent sexual ideology. Because of the dislocation of reigning principles and common values, the ideology of sex becomes one of the most popular fascinations of the modern age.

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[5] Sanford Pinsker, "Saul Bellow in the Classroom," *College English* 34: 2 (1972-73): 979-80.

Sammler's encounter with the students exposes him to the fact that sex becomes the sole criterion of judgment in the students' world and sex leads to the disintegration of authority among youth. Sammler's talk is significant because it serves two purposes. First, it forces him out of his withdrawal and brings him face to face with the radicals of the sixties; secondly, it shakes his belief in the utopian era he unconsciously longs for.[6] The shock of the experience contributes greatly to the change in his outlook since it triggers the beginning of his self-evaluation. When Sammler quotes George Orwell, who claimed that the British radicals were protected by the Royal Navy, an infuriated heckler shouts: "Why do you listen to this effete old shit? What has he got to tell you? His balls are dry. He's dead. He can't come" (p. 42).[7] Sammler is "not so much personally offended by the event as struck by the will to offend" (p. 43). The fact that the student equates sexual potency with intellectual ability epitomizes for Sammler the cultural confusion that characterizes American life: "All this confused sex-excrement-militancy, explosiveness, abusiveness, tooth-showing Barbary ape howling" (p. 43). Above all, in acting without dignity, the students, for Sammler show

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[6] Eusebio L. Rodrigues, *Quest for the Human* , p. 212.

[7] Bellow himself has apparently experienced a similiar incident. In a letter to Mark Harris, he expressed his feelings about the incident: "The thing at S. F. State was very bad. I'm not too easy to offend at my age [53], and I don't think I was personally affronted--that's not my style. The thing was offensive though. Being denounced by Salas as an old shit to an assembly which seemed to find the whole thing deliciously thrilling. Being told furthermore that 'this is an effete old man--he can't come!'" Mark Harris, "Saul Bellow at Purdue," *The Georgia Review* 32 (Winter, 1978): 716.

> they had no view of the nobility of being intellectuals and judges of the social order. What a pity! old Sammler thought. A human being, valuing himself for the right reasons, has and restores order, authority. When the internal parts are in order. They must be in order. But what was it to be arrested in the stage of toilet training! . . . Who had raised the diaper flag? Who had made shit a sacrament? (p. 45).

The disintegration of various forms of authority like the church and the family, accompanied by the absence of a value system which restrains and guides people's behavior, has resulted in social anarchy. Because of the lack of the proper forces of culture and tradition, which usually provide individuals with inner stability, the masses consider themselves free from any constriction; consequently, they act as they please. The students epitomize the lack of discipline; they have no regard for someone like Sammler because they do not share the same ideas of decorum and propriety.

The black pickpocket shares the students' standard of judgment. He, too, believes that sex is the criterion for judgment. Sammler keeps running into the black man who skillfully and methodically robs the bus passengers between Columbus Circle and Seventy-second Street. In his camel's hair coat and Christian Dior dark glasses, the black man is compared to an "African prince" (p.

17). However, there are many references to him as a beast as well. Living by the law of the jungle, he does not abide by the civility of human behavior. When Sammler sees him operating on the bus, he quickly informs the police, so that the criminal will be kept away from the public, but the policeman he talks to is not interested in taking any action. This disturbs Sammler and reinforces his views of "the barbarous world" he lives in. In frustration, he has only this to say to himself: "America! . . . Advertised throughout the universe as the most desirable, most exemplary of all nations" (p. 17).

When he realizes that he has been observed, the black man follows Sammler to the lobby of his apartment, where he silently but with authority exposes himself. Sammler is both intrigued and repulsed by the black man's assertion of authority and his defiant attitude as one who "took the slackness, the cowardice of the world for granted" (p. 47). In his defiant behavior, the pickpocket brings to mind Aleck/Alice's dismissal of American society in *Herzog* by simply offering himself as an object of sexuality.

As Sammler endeavors to unravel the thief's mysterious exposure, he notes that

> there was in the man's organ, . . . in its pride and shown in its own right, a prominent and separate object intended to communicate authority. As, within the sex ideology of these days, it well might. It was a symbol of superlegitimacy or sovereignty. It was a mystery (p. 54).

Sammler also associates the black man with Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea* , a book his mother had given him on his sixteenth birthday. According to Schopenhauer, "the organs of sex are the seat of the Will" (p. 191), and "the thief in the lobby," Sammler concludes, "agreed. He took out the instrument of the Will" (p. 191). The black man's attitude manifests the radical student's code of behavior which dictates that the only criterion for judgment is sexual potency.

The sexual ideology, which in *Herzog* influences the behavior of only a few people, becomes universalized in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*. The youth are not the only ones who are obsessed with this cult; surprisingly the elderly are too:

> It was amusing--Sammler noted in old women wearing textured tights, in old sexual men, this quiver of vivacity with which they obeyed the sovereign youth-style. . . . And of course no one knew when to quit. No one made sober, decent terms with death (p. 11).

This echoes Bellow's views that in modern hedonistic society, since the majority fail to achieve reconciliation with death, they keep pursuing instant gratification. In an interview, Bellow elaborates on this point:

> The real problem . . . is the problem of death. If people don't know how to come to terms with it, and souls have no preparation, then the only thing is to be [eternally] young and in pursuit of pleasure, and further sexual and hedonistic horizons.[8]

Sammler conducts himself with dignity; he is embedded in traditional cultural values, and since his "second encounter" (p. 108) with humanity, he strives to achieve peace with the knowledge of death. Walter Bruch, on the other hand, displays a case of "sexual neurosis" (p. 59). Like Sammler, he has experienced many of the atrocities of the war, but he has never regained his self-respect, nor totally recovered from the shock. He reduces himself to a clown, by reliving the past, playing the corpse, and singing funeral songs. As much as he is obsessed with his death, he is also imprisoned in "sex business" (p. 56). He fulfills his sexual fantasies by being aroused by the arms of Puerto Rican women. He also thinks that he alone is afflicted with the contemporary vice: the sexual lunacy that permeates modern America.

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[8] Jane Howard, "Mr. Bellow Considers his Planet," *Life* 68 (3 April, 1970): 60

While Sammler extricates himself from this sexual madness, Bruch lets himself be driven into it. Sammler emphasizes the point that, because of his traditions and values, he conducts himself differently and with the dignity of his age. He claims that he does not allow his sexual inclination to overrule his always rational behavior: "it had never greatly mattered, and mattered less than ever now, in the seventies" (p. 63).[9] He dismisses his friend's sexual perplexities as the outcome of the repressions of the past, and he categorizes him as merely a case of "sexual neurosis" (p. 59).

In my view, inner stability characterizes the attitude of people who are informed by a culture which gives them an identity. However, with the rapid rise of mass culture, most people are not bound to each other through family unity and inner values.

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[9] However, in his constant interest in encouraging and listening to Angela's sexual adventures and his awareness of her physical appearance, Sammler is more involved in the sexual madness of the age than he is able to admit.

Consequently, they float, clinging to the widespread crazes of the age. The epitome of loss of the self, driven into extremes of sexual freedom, is exemplified in Angela Gruner. Some of Bellow's writings indicate his acerbic views, strong disapproval, and growing prejudices against women in general. Yet Bellow's views also shed some light on his protagonist's extreme, if not bitter, outlook toward all the women in the novel, especially Angela. Bellow states in an interview about modern women:

> I'm afraid they' ll have dragging breasts. I'm all for freedom, short of degeneracy. As John Stuart Mill foresaw, women today show all the characteristics of slaves in revolt. They're prone to the excesses of the lately servile, the newly freed. I'd like to see their increased freedom accompanied by human development. Gentleness and generosity, which used to be considered feminine qualities, are certainly not contemptible--are they? ("Bellow Considers," p. 59).

His portrayal of Angela is that of a modern woman who lacks genuine feminine qualities as Bellow sees them and who is more imprisoned than liberated by her freedom. The essence of her personality revolves around her sexual obsessions. With her voluptuous physique, beautiful legs and provocative comportment, Angela is the expression of erotic liberty. Similar to Herzog's view of Madeleine, Wallace sees Angela as "a female-power type, *la femme fatale* ."; she "represents the realism of the race, which is always pointing out that wisdom, beauty, glory, courage in men are just vanities and her business is to beat down the man's legend about himself" (p. 171). Coming from the confused "high-IQ moron" (p. 163), as Gruner describes his son, this view is to be taken with reservation because Wallace likes to exaggerate everything. He and his sister seem to hold a grudge against each other and seem to carry on unresolved childhood entanglements. However, in her unbridled sexual experimentation in Acapulco, Angela indulges in the kind of hedonism that undermines genuine feeling and intimacy between two people who care for each other. She does not take into consideration fidelity, the crucial basis of a relationship. Sammler summarizes Angela's inability to commit herself to another person as follows:

> Human attachments being so light, there were probably lists of alternates, preconscious reserves--men met in the park while walking the dog; people one had chatted with at the Museum of Modern Art; this fellow with the sideburns; that one with dark sexy eyes; the person with the child in a sanitarium, the wife with multiple sclerosis. To go with quantities of ideas and purposes there were quantities of people (p. 272).

Angela lacks maturity and independent thinking. Like a child, she is caught up in the confusion of modernity and follows blindly the stream of society and what the moment dictates; Sammler remarks on the urge to follow others' action, a characteristic of mass society:

> Accept and grant that happiness is to do what most other people do. Then you must incarnate what others incarnate. If prejudices, prejudice. If rage, then rage. If

> sex, then sex. But don't contradict your time. Just don't contradict it, that's all (p. 69).

Like Madeleine, Angela does not live by any outside authority except that of her own caprice. She comes from a Jewish family, but like her brother, she is brought up without a value system. She has no discipline of a tradition. In the process of trying to fit in American society, the Gruners move away from their Jewish heritage. She has no fundamental principles or values to fall back on. Since she fails to make any order within herself a criterion for self-awareness, she drifts from one man to another, longing to fill up the void within. The spirit of the age is summarized by Sammler's comment that:

> The labor of Puritanism was now ending. The dark satanic mills changing into light satanic mills. The reprobates converted into children of joy, the sexual ways of the seraglio and of the Congo bush adopted by the emancipated masses of New York, Amsterdam, London (p. 33).

This exaggeration in tone indicates Sammler's emotional detachment from others, including his family members. But this quotation also conveys the lack of a center of values which allows people, like Angela, inner stability and a sense of who she is. The Puritan values, which in *The Europeans* provide the New Englanders with stability, propriety, and a sense of who they are, lose their effectiveness in New York, where the masses think they are totally exempt from any restrictions and beyond any restraint that the proper forces of culture impose upon the ego.

Angela's sexual license, according to Bellow, is a part of the increasing "Roman paganism" that sweeps the country. She imprisons herself through her sexual activities. She reduces all her human potentials to a mere *"volupté "* (p. 145) and transmits her "powerful message of gender . . . with comedy" (p. 67). "

> Angela was always unusually involved in difficulty and suffering, tripping on invisible obstructions, bringing forth complications of painful mischief which made him wonder whether this volupte was not one of the sorest strangest burdens that could be laid on a woman's soul (p. 145).

Like Verena Tarrant, Angela embodies a sort of American innocence. She does not comprehend her age; she has no idea of judging herself and others. More than once, she is compared to a child: "In Angela's expression . . . there was something soft, a hint of infancy or of baby reverie" (p. 146). Even her appearance suggests her immaturity. Her "sexual kindergarden dress" (273), for example, indicates her effort to remain a perpetual child. And when Sammler brings to her attention her bad judgment in her choice of a dress when she comes to visit her dying father in the hospital, she is not even aware of the quality or importance of her attire.

Angela's irresponsibility and carelessness emerge from her parents' lack of commitment to their children's inner well- being. Like Verena and Madeleine, she has been brought up in a value system that does not clearly distinguishes between right and wrong. Like Madeleine, whom Herzog describes in a letter to Monsignor Hilton as "the would-be aristocrat" (p. 112), Angela has been lightly granted the privileges of the aristocracy without assuming its responsibilities. With an income of half a million to live on, she has never been forced to work. As a result, she does not feel useful, especially as she does not possess any dream to pursue or purpose in life to fulfill. Though in her thirties, she has not yet achieved any control over her life. Her "parents must have longed overmuch for babies and so inhibited something in their children's cycle of development" (p. 146).

Angela accurately identifies the crux of her situation when she holds her father partly responsible for her lack of focus in life. She tells her uncle that her father's motive in pampering her is not completely unselfish when she remarks that her father "also lived through [her]" (p. 149). It is clear that Gruner is a product of democracy, and as Sammler remarks, "Democracy was propaganda" (p. 82). While he showers his two children with money in order to fit in with the bourgeois standards of New York, he fails to transmit his values to them. Moreover, as in James's *The Bostonians* and Bellow's *Herzog* , the mother, who is usually "intermediary between the past and the future" (*Herzog* , p. 202), is totally absent from her children's lives, and even when she was alive, she spent most of her time indulging herself in spending her husband's money.

Sammler and Angela do not share the same set of values. He is aware of his niece's sexual activities, but he risks no open comment. However, when he finds Angela sitting in the hospital waiting-room, he suggests that she should seek reconciliation and forgiveness from her dying father. But "an old-time deathbed scene," as she describes her uncle's suggestion, goes against her character. It means conformity to the old-fashioned system which encourages respect, peace, and consideration for parents. She neither comprehends nor wants to fathom Sammler's sense of morality.

The only value judgment she is familiar with is the one already established by the Columbia University student and the black pickpocket. As a result of Sammler's suggestion, Angela is so infuriated by his way of perceiving reality that she insults him by using the same rhetoric as the radical students:

> 'You lead a special life in that dumpy room. Charming, but what's it got to do with anything! I don't think you understand people's business. What do you mean about fellatio? What do you know about it?' . . . . What she threw at him was what the young man at Columbia had also cried out. He was out of it. A tall, dry, not agreeable man, censorious, giving himself airs. . . . *Hors d'usage* . Against the wall. *A la Lanterne* ! (p. 280)

Like the radical student, Angela is not aware of any reality greater than her own. She has no allegiance to conformity and no respect for authority. Consequently, she drifts in the clutter of mass society, participating in the disorder and disruption that permeate her way of life.

The "sexual madness" that rules the lives of Angela Gruner, Walter Bruch, the black pickpocket, and the Columbia University students is a product of the alienation of the self in mass society. Whereas in a community people are emotionally bound to one another through common experience, common interests, and common beliefs, in mass society the deterioration in human relationships stems from a culture which is no longer strong enough to sustain its members and to allow them self-fulfillment. As a result, unable to relate to each other as individuals, they resort to sexual hedonism, which they use to compensate for their inner void.

The transformation of American culture by mass communication enhances this inner void; the media grow into an effective weapon to help conceal reality. Lionel Feffer is the main character representing this theme. A "sly, shrewd, meddling" character, he falls under the category Bellow has aptly described elsewhere as one of those "media-managing intellectuals," those "college-educated swinging, bearded, costumed, bohemianized intellectuals [who] are writing the ads, manufacturing the gimmicks, directing the shows, exploiting the Woodstocks" ("Culture Now," p. 174). We can trace the development of such a character from Valentine Gersbach in *Herzog* to Lionel Feffer in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* to Dewey Spangler in *The Dean's December.* As a university instructor, Feffer's paramount responsibility is to raise awareness. However, he consciously chooses to propagate disorder in mass society. "An ingenious operator" and "enterprising character," Feffer uses his university position as a base from which he conducts his diverse businesses: "He had money in the stock market. He was vice-president of a Guatemalan insurance company. . . . He belonged to a corresponding society called the Foreign Ministers' Club" (p. 39). He is not interested in education or knowledge. His aim is to make as much money as possible by manipulating his acquaintances while seducing their young wives.

Sammler, like Bellow, accuses intellectuals of forsaking their responsibility as educators, transmitters of ethical values, and preservers of culture for their petty egotistical pursuits:

> You wondered whether this Western culture could survive universal dissemination--whether only its science and technology or administrative practices would travel, be adopted by other societies. Or whether the worst enemies of civilization might not prove to be its petted intellectuals who attacked it at its weakest moments--attacked it in the name of proletarian revolution, in the name of reason, and in the name of irrationality, in the name of visceral depth, in the name of sex, in the name of perfect instantaneous freedom (p. 34).

Sammler is presented as an alternative model. He advocates genuine cultural communication. His conversation with Dr. Lal illustrates the kind of communication he would like to exchange with others. He is aware of being bombarded with too much information and publicity, and he insists on and values the idea that

> one had to learn to distinguish. To distinguish and distinguish and distinguish. It was distinguishing, not explanation, that mattered. Explanation was for the mental masses. Adult education. The upswing of general consciousness. . . . But distinguishing? A higher activity (p. 61).

Indeed, Sammler is particular about what he reads. He wants to save his one good eye for what he considers important. He only reads the writings of thirteenth and fourteenth-century Christian mystics such as Heinrich Suso, Johannes Tauler, and especially Meister Eckart. The fact that he reads these writings in the original language is significant because it suggests that what Sammler finds important and relevant for his mental nourishment is not available to the masses. Sammler finds all the knowledge he strives for in these authors.

Sammler's means of communication is enriching for his inquisitive mind, but, like Herzog's letter-writing, it is ineffective in the age of mass communication. On the contrary, Feffer, who is a communicator and university orator, uses the media to consciously spread ignorance and in the process acquires celebrity status. Like Valentine Gersbach, Feffer relies on his own assets, shrewdness, "money, brag, and Jewish foibles" (p. 102), to define himself. He does not possess any standard of value; consequently, he constantly measures himself by how many he outsmarts. Sammler correctly notes that "when people are so desperately impotent, they play that instrument, the personality, louder and wilder" (p. 213).

Lacking the reverence for other people's privacy and the civility of a gentleman, Feffer does not hesitate to meddle in others' affairs. Like Matthias Pardon in *The Bostonians* , Feffer intrudes upon others' privacy. He not only manipulates Sammler into divulging the story about the pickpocket's indecent exposure, but also uses the story to earn publicity. True to his entrepreneurial nature, he closely watches over the black man and takes pictures of the thief in action. His intention is not humane, that is to defend the public safety from the thief, but merely promotional and exhibitionistic; he wants to make money by selling the photographs to *Look* magazine. Feffer fits the description that Bellow provides when asked what he thinks of Norman Mailer: "He's a public actor, swinger, a gladiator and punch-trader, who brings a message of emancipation to his middle-class brothers" ("Bellow Considers," p. 60). Like Dewey Spangler in *The Dean's December* , Feffer uses his education not to achieve discrimination of taste and refinement of comportment, but merely to acquire money and fame. Bellow makes the same point in "A Matter of the Soul":

> The learned are further from art and taste than they were even a generation ago. If you believe in the truth of Stendhal's rule, *'Le mauvais goût mène aux crimes* ' [Bad taste leads to crime], you can foresee no end to the waves of crime to come (p. 28).

In Feffer's case, this statement is indeed suitable. He is so transfixed in his pursuit of wealth and prestige that he fails to see the consequences of his intrusion on the black pickpocket. In his endeavor to expose the thief, Feffer is not motivated by his concern for the safety of others. Like Matthias Pardon, in *The Bostonians* , interferes in others' lives as a license he can use within the frame of American democracy.

Mass communication adds to the social anarchy by promoting false notions and dictating a standard of judgment that regulates mass man's behavior. Eisen, another mass communicator, re-enacts exactly what the media transmit to him. Eisen, "the madman [who] wore a magenta shirt with a persimmon-colored necktie as thick as an ox tongue" (p. 154), sees violence as the only means to stop.

violence. Instead of simply releasing Feffer from the pickpocket's grip, Eisen uses his bag, which contains pieces of metal, as a weapon. In the process, he almost crushes the man's face. Sammler is stunned by Eisen's crude action and brutal logic: "You can't hit a man like that just once. When you hit him you must really hit him. Otherwise he'll kill you" (p. 266). As a former soldier, Eisen believes in the code of war. Indeed, this kind of scene is recurrent in Bellow's novels as an illustration of violence as part of mass society.

Eisen, the mercenary and phony artist, adds to the chaos of mass society. He distorts the essence of an art which is true to life by using art as a commodity to find his way in American society: "By using color, he robbed every subject of color. Everybody looked like a corpse with black lips and red eyes, with faces a kind of leftover cooked-liver green" (p. 62).

Without inner stability or a standard of judgment, he is magnetically drawn to New York City. Without an education, he strives to acquire a new image by producing what the mass market asks of him. Sammler cogently notes that Eisen has the right "intuition about New York" (62) which allows phony artists to thrive. With his misconceptions of the essence of art and its role in life, Eisen hopes to join the masses of New York who in their madness use "high knowledge" as their starting point.

Controlled by rootless and unprincipled agents like Feffer, whose sole purpose is to make money, mass communication contributes to the chaos which characterizes urban environments. Although Feffer is not in the media business, as an instructor, he transmits his beliefs to future generations. The media, in other words, conceal reality by presenting crimes and violence as appealing acts to the hypnotized masses who are magnetically drawn to what is presented as glamorous and appealing.

For the survival and development of culture in the individual and society, some degree of stability and continuity are necessary.[10] Since a twentieth century city the changes are swift and uncontrolled, it is almost impossible for a city-based culture to survive the social and cultural changes and remain vigorous and strong. The fact that *Mr. Sammler's Planet* is set in New York is significant. As the largest city in the United States of America, New York presents an extreme of the destructive influence of the city on culture.

In other words, because of its lack of a living culture, its speed and noise, a city environment generates violence in its inhabitants. Like the child-killing scene in *Herzog* , Eisen's violence against the black pickpocket serves to illustrate the effects of the destructive forces of New York on its masses. Violence results from the social anarchy that characterizes mass society. In the urban conglomeration, it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to live by customs and traditions. Critics of the city have repeatedly established the link between the prevalence of crimes, the decay of cities and the disintegration of cultural values. Robert Park, for instance, argues in an essay published as early as 1916 that,

> it is probably the breaking down of local attachments and the weakening of the restraints and inhibitions of the

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[10] Morton and Lucia White, *The Intelleetual Versus the City* . (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 237.

> primary group, under the influence of the urban environment, which are largely responsible for the increase of vice and crime in great cities.[11]

Because of the social chaos which overwhelms city dwellers, they are unable to express their human qualities. In *The American Scene* , James sees a causal relationship between the confusion and turmoil which American cities generate in him and the absence of taste and tranquility which result from the disintegration of traditions, customs, and common values. Since the city, as White contends, is "too wild, too vulgar, too ostentatious, too uncontrolled, too gaudy, too full of things that disturb the sensibility of the fastidious like Henry James. . ."[12] it is extremely difficult for culture, which requires history, past and tradition, to establish its roots in such a milieu. James indirectly provides an explanation of how difficult it is for a culture to grow in a twentieth century American city, by underscoring the elusive spiritual aspects of culture:

> It takes an endless amount of history to make even a little tradition, and an endless amount of tradition to make even a little taste, and an endless amount of taste, by the same token, to make even a little tranquility. Tranquility results largely from taste tactfully applied, taste lighted above all by the experience and possessed of a clue for its labyrinth.[13]

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[11] Quoted in White's *The Intellectual Versus the City. p. 165*

[12] White, p. 227.

[13] Henry James, *The American Scene* . (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 169.

The stability of a culture allows for tranquility, a tranquility which is derived from harmony between inner being and outside reality. Henry James and Saul Bellow see the forces of urbanization as menacing and detrimental to culture. The tranquility James refers to is equivalent to what both Arnold and Bellow call "inward" or "inner" culture, which survives the outside changes that are inevitable in the modern age. Because of the absence of this tranquility, the urban masses fulfill what their unrestrained ego dictates. Since their ego is not rooted in or disciplined by any tradition, it strives to accomplish uncontrolled and capricious goals. Hence, the urban clutter inspires violence, enhances the masses' lack of spiritual stability, and adds to already chaotic sensibilities

Like Herzog, who is pressured by his urban environment, Sammler is driven to the isolation of his room by the "Great Noise" that infiltrates New York City. Although he likes walking on Broadway, like a camera-eye, he is detached from it. He uses it as a way to escape his dark thoughts about his experiences in the War. As he succinctly puts it, "New York makes one think about the collapse of civilization, about Sodom and Gomorrah, the end of the world" (p. 277).

In *Mr. Sammler's Planet* , New York is presented as a force, a place where common cultural values are rapidly disintegrating, where human communication is declining, and where a discerning sensibility like Sammler's is thwarted. In other words, a city is hostile and inimical to the "tradition of sensibility". In fact, the only kind of culture which draws its vitality from the crudeness of its surrounding is mass culture.

However, in spite of the reality of mass society, which breeds confusion and disorder in its inhabitants, Bellow seems to insist that there are still positive values which, although not widely recognized, make life worthwhile. Although he is aware of the "anarchy of the streets" (p. 137), the drudgery of the city, and its atrocious reality, Sammler still wants to live, because man

> has something in him which he feels it important to continue. Something that deserves to go on, and we all know it. The spirit feels cheated, outraged, defiled, corrupted, fragmented, injured. Still it knows what it knows, and the knowledge cannot be gotten rid of (p. 215).

This passage echoes Herzog's idea, "Let life continue--we may not deserve it, but let it continue" (p. 51). For the remainder of his life, Sammler wishes to "live with a civil heart. With disinterested charity" (p. 125), striving to reject the "vulgar cowardly conclusion" that "reality was a terrible thing, and that the final truth about mankind was overwhelming and crushing" (p. 255).

One of the possibilities which gives meaning to life can be found in people who make a difference in others' lives. Sammler's most penetrating criticism, which includes almost everyone, spares only his nephew, Dr. Elya Gruner, and, to a certain extent, Dr. Govinda Lal, the Hindu scientist. He begins by censoring rich men for their "permissible criminality" (p. 72), but he then realizes that any reference to the rich as a whole will inevitably include his nephew. Consequently, he abandons his generalization: "Sammler denied himself the privilege of the high-principled intellectual who must always be applying the purest standards and thumping the rest of his species on the head" (p. 72).

Although he qualifies his acceptance of his nephew as someone who comes from "the common branch of the family" (p. 80), he holds genuine esteem for him because of his kindness and caring. He had taken Sammler and his daughter Shula out of the DP camp in Salzburg and brought them over to the United States (p. 14). For the last twenty-two years, he has taken care of them, inventing a job for Shula and supporting, without a day of neglect, his elderly uncle. Sammler is aware of his nephew's shortcomings. He suspects, for example, that the doctor has made money performing illegal abortions for the Mafia. He even claims that Elya may have had "his own lustful tendencies" (p. 149) and derived erotic pleasures from Angela's excesses in sexuality. Yet to Sammler, Elya is the most admirable human being he knows.

Unlike others who contribute to the void that characterizes modern life, Elya strives to find meaning in his life. In spite of the challenges of the modern condition and the coerciveness of urban life, he can still be "elaborately deferential, positively Chinese in observing old forms" (p. 72). Sammler respects Elya for fulfilling his duty even though he had never wished to be a doctor (p. 163). "He had disliked his trade--the knife, blood. He had been conscientious. He had done his duty" (p. 78). He also has genuine family feelings, and more important "took thought for others" (p. 81). By Sammler's and Bellow's criteria of judgment, Gruner is one of the "few [who] may comprehend that it is the strength to do one's duty daily and promptly that makes saints and heroes" (p. 87).

This depiction of a saint brings to mind Ortega's definition of the "select man" as "the man who demands more of himself than the rest" (*The Revolt of the Masses* , p. 15). In contrast to the distraught individuals who drift in the industrialized society and who ignore the importance of habit, custom, and inheritance, and who thus exemplify a sense of dislocation of the reigning values, Elya carries himself well, balancing tradition with modernity, especially in his human dealings. To this man only, Sammler has something to say (p. 266). Though he never has the chance to exchange any parting words with Elya, he delivers a eulogy in front of Elya's corpse. When he enumerates the doctor's good qualities, he brings out his own feelings at the same time. He declares to Angela that

> your father has had his assignments. Husband, medical man--he was a good doctor--family man. . . . He's made something of himself. . . . He knew there had been good men before him, that there were good men to come, and he wanted to be one of them . . . . [He] has accomplished something good. Brought himself through (p. 276).

In contrast to Gruner, Sammler finds himself deficient in human emotions. He describes himself as "relatively useless" , an "Anglophile intellectual. . . and person of culture" (p. 276). Despite his cultural background, Sammler lacks Elya's tolerance since he does not accept people the way they are, as Elya unconditionally does. Although he died estranged from his children, he tried in his life-time to do the best he could as a father. Unlike Sammler, Elya is spontaneous in his relationships and uninhibited in getting close to people because he does not judge them. Elya's compassion allows him to strengthen his bond with human beings. He "always insisted on having affectionate endorsements, approbation, the good will of all who drew near" (p. 75). Devoted to helping others and even deferential in accepting his death, Elya has met the "terms of his contract." Sammler notes: "The terms which, in his inmost heart, each man knows. As I know mine. As all know. For that is the truth of it--that we all know. God, that we know, that we know, we know, we know" (p. 286).

As a matter of fact, the novel comes full-circle because it begins as it ends, reiterating the same idea of knowledge Sammler starts off with: "The soul wanted what it wanted. It had its own natural knowledge. It sat unhappily on superstructures of explanation, poor bird, not knowing which way to fly" (p. 7). Throughout the novel, Bellow makes various references to the kind of knowledge he elsewhere defines as "implicit knowledge" (Pinsker, p. 977) and in the novel he describes it as the "natural knowledge" of the soul (p. 7) and the knowledge of the spirit (p. 215). Defining that kind of knowledge, Bellow makes the following comment about the end of *Mr. Sammler's Planet* :

> You read the New Testament and the assumption Jesus makes continually is that people know the difference immediately between good and evil--as soon as you present it to them. And that is, in part, what faith means. . . . It means that there is an implicit knowledge--very ancient, if not eternal--which human beings really share and that if they based their relationships on that knowledge, existence could be transformed ("Bellow in Classroom," p. 977).

In Sammler's estimation, Gruner proves to be aware of this knowledge. He is different from most of the characters in the novel since he strives to base his relationships on the implicit knowledge, which is "based on the belief that there is the same truth in the heart of every human being, or a splash of God's own spirit, and that this is the richest thing we share in common" (p. 173). Elya's presence, therefore, serves as a catalyst in Sammler's change of vision. He serves to bring back and sustain the older man's faith in mankind.

The possibility of genuine communication with Dr. Govinda Lal also brings enjoyment and satisfaction to Sammler. Dr. Lal invites Sammler's respect. Lal is, like Ussher Arkin, a man he can talk to, a man he can have "immediate intimacy" with.[14] Although the Hindu biophysicist is not a well-developed character, he serves as a qualified and proper audience for Sammler. Originating from "a nation of vast multitudes" (p. 200), Lal is aware that this planet is overpopulated and that "the species is eating itself up" (p. 200). Consequently, he suggests an outlet for our overwhelming problems: "And now Kingdom Come is directly over us and waiting to receive the fragments of a final explosion. Much better the moon" (p. 200). However, although rooted in a very traditional culture informed by ancient religions, Lal is basing his project on scientific data only; he is not concerned with its moral implications: "There is no duty in biology. There is no sovereign obligation to one's breed. When biological destiny is fulfilled in reproduction the desire is often to die" (p. 201). In his plan for the future of humanity on the moon, Lal does not take into consideration the fact that a human being is more than just a biological specimen. There is no room for spiritual or ethical values that are fundamental for human happiness.

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[14] Chirantan Kulshrestha, " A Conversation with Saul Bellow," *Chicago Review* 23: 4 (1972): 9.

Sammler is aware that things are falling apart and that civilization is collapsing, but he does not share Lal's view. Only on the earth can we relate to others. Indeed, Lal's solution to the crisis that envelops humanity can serve as an analogy to Sammler's endeavor to escape from people to the isolation of his room. Sammler's experience with the Hindu scientist forces him to see that only in society and in relation to others can we define ourselves as human.

In "Distractions of a Fiction Writer," Bellow quotes Simone Weil saying that "[t]o believe in the existence of human beings as such is love" (20), and goes on to specify that the writer's task is to express this love. Yet, he creates a Sammler who has culture, refinement, and taste, but lacks spontaneity or love in his relationships. Sammler would like to relate to others and possess a disposition to love and yet not to overlook their deficiency. He keeps reminding himself to be objective in his attitudes towards others: "The best, I have found, is to be disinterested. Not as misanthropes dissociate themselves, by judging, but by not judging. By willing as God wills" (p. 215). But, in effect, he fails to live up to the ideal of "a civil heart [and] disinterested charity" (p. 125), except in his relationships with Elya and Lal. By the closing of the novel, Bellow contrives to change things around by moderating his protagonist's initial pessimistic outlook. He maintains, despite the madness he registers, that "[t]here are still human qualities. Our weak species fought its fear, our crazy species fought its criminality. We are an animal of genius" (p. 278). Yet, although Bellow endeavors to underline human attachments, these possibilities seem not strong enough to withstand the pressures of mass culture. With the death of the only person who makes a difference, Sammler remains alienated not only from his relatives and acquaintances, but especially from the milieu he inhabits. Elya's death leaves a gap in Sammler's and in American cultural lives, which no one is qualified to fill.

In *Mr. Sammler's Planet* , Bellow is more critical of the American way of life than in *Herzog* ; Bellow also provides a critique of Sammler's way of interpreting American culture. Bellow's use of Sammler's fastidious sensibility, European background, and advanced knowledge allows him to provide a more pointed and acute critique of American culture. Sammler epitomizes the voice of the past that speaks for order, stability and tradition. However, in the technological age, which brings about the deterioration of common cultural values, the relevance of the past is denied by most of the characters, with whom Sammler comes in contact, especially the young. The novel illustrates Sammler's struggle to live by the traditional values within the crudeness of his milieu. He, therefore, retires to his own mystical planet, disregarding the massive ocean of information and savouring knowledge from the writings of thirteenth and fourteenth-century Christian mystics and the Bible.

Nevertheless, even though he is aware of the disintegration of cultural values, the dissolution in human relatedness, especially in an urban environment which loosens social ties and makes human communication impossible, the universality of the "sexual madness" and the uncontrollable growth of the media, Sammler rejects Dr. Lal's claim of the moon as the ideal solution to the confusion of the age. Bellow accentuates Sammler's acceptance of the physical planet, earth, which, though it faces many insurmountable problems, still holds values crucial for human beings, especially in their relationships with each other.

VI. The Triumph of The Media

Saul Bellow's ninth novel, *The Dean's December* , focuses on, among other things, Albert Corde's inquisitive and restless consciousness, which is in sharp and relentless conflict with the conditions of his time. Unlike Herzog, who at forty-seven years of age is too caught up in his personal liaisons with various women to take a firm and clear stand on mass culture, Corde, in his mid-fifties, is preoccupied with larger questions than his relationship with his wife, albeit this marriage is not without shortcomings. Like Sammler, Corde reflects on issues such as the state of contemporary culture, the decay of large cities, the dehumanization of urban populations, the overwhelming success of the "philistine intellectual", and the triumph of the mass media. The magnitude of these not-so-easily-settled questions presses on Corde's discerning sensibility as he strives to make sense of his chaotic milieu and define his responsibility as a concerned citizen and intellectual.

In this chapter, I will start by concentrating on Corde's friendships with his European in-laws, which serve as contrasts to the dissolution of his relationships with his American kin. Corde's experience in Rumania reveals that, while family unity is still pertinent to the lives of his European relatives and crucial to their education, in the United States most family values have lost their relevance to most characters in the novel. Bellow suggests that, on the one hand, although the Rumanians are oppressed by the dictatorship of their communist regime, they find solace and fulfillment in the closeness of their families. On the other hand, Corde's distressing interaction with his nephew Mason Zaehner and his cousin Maxie Detillion serves not only to illuminate the breakup of human relationships, but also to provide a clear view of the disintegration of the self in mass society. I will then show that the emphasis in *The Dean's December* is on mass communication, which Bellow presents as the principal threat to culture. There is a noticeable shift of emphasis from the novels I have previously discussed; in those novels, threats to culture are presented in many forms, such as the breakup of the family or sexual madness; in *The Dean's December* , the threat is concentrated and focused into one issue: the effect of mass communication on culture. Corde's awareness of the deteriorating social and cultural conditions in Chicago and his experience with his childhood friend Dewey Spangler force him to become cognizant of the rise of the "philistine intellectual" and to take a clear stand against the type by writing controversial articles which he publishes in *Harper's* magazine and which eventually cost him his job as Dean of Students. In juxtaposing Corde's defeat after the publication of his articles with Spangler's overwhelming success in controlling public opinion, Bellow underlines the essential point that culture is endangered by the growing cultural authority of the media. Finally, I will show that Bellow suggests that there is a strong connection between mass communication and the transformation of American society; the triumph of the media evokes the degeneracy of a culture which resists Corde's poetic style of writing. Furthermore, because of the disintegration of cultural values, people are not bound to life by strongly determined ties; consequently, they float without a sense of purpose, constantly trying to fulfill the demands of their unrestrained egos. The outcome, then, is chaos and confusion which inevitably lead to violence, alienation of the races, and, most important, loss of self.

While European families presented in *The Dean's December* are portrayed as units of instruction, support, and solace, family in the United States becomes the primary target of severe dislocations as its members grow independent and become removed from the sanctuary of personal relations. Like James, Bellow repeatedly uses Europe as a yardstick to underline what is lacking in American society. For instance, where James presents New Englanders in *The Europeans* with a strong sense of morality, firm beliefs, and ethical values, at the same time he presents the Europeans with traditions, taste, and sophistication but with indifference to minor ethical concerns, but in *The Dean's December* , in the Bucharest of the first two years in the 1980s, people still relate to each other as individuals despite the oppression of the communist regime. In the United States, however, and especially in large cities like Chicago, communication among people is rendered difficult, if not impossible. Europe provides a vantage point from which Corde can see clearly and examine his own country.

As Bellow comments in an interview, "in Bucharest and Eastern Europe one can see a more old-fashioned sort of human attachment."[1] The purpose of Corde's and his wife, Minna's, visit to

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[1] Matthew C. Roudané, "An Interview with Saul Bellow," *Contemporary Literature* 25: 3 (Fall, 1984): 271.

Europe is mainly visit her dying mother and to alleviate some of her aunt's hardship. They spend the last days of a cold and gloomy December in Bucharest endeavoring to find ways to beat the communist system so that they can visit Valeria, Minna's dying mother. However, except for three visits to the hospital, the couple finds it impossible to deal with the totalitarian regime represented by the hospital superintendent, a tyrannical colonel. This rigid system deprives individuals of their human rights. The state controls its people; it even employs spies, such as the concierge Ioanna, who reports her neighbors' everyday activities to the police.

In spite of the dictatorship of the Rumanian regime, relationships among people are based on genuine emotions and concerns: "Here everyone was kind--family and friends, warmhearted people--he liked them very much, to him they were 'old Europe.'"[2] Corde is intrigued by "the humane cooperation among women in a Communist society" (p. 75). Although Ioanna, the concierge, is a spy, she is considered one of the family: "There was a love community of women. The matriarch was Valeria. Ioanna was a member in good standing. This apartment was the center of an extended feminine hierarchy" (p. 72). Some of them report to the government about others' activities, but they maintain a strong bond of kinship. Mihai Petrescu, a chef de cabinet, a KGB agent, and a friend of the family, combines his duty to the communist system with his "familial intimacy" with the Raresh family. He notes about Valeria: "Elle a été une mère, une consolatrice pour moi" (7).

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[2] Saul Bellow, *The Dean's December* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 1. Hereafter references to the book will be included in parentheses within the text.

Valeria's imminent death touches each one of them since they ignore their political inclinations to provide solace and comfort. Corde comments, "Here you led a crypto-emotional life in the shadow of the Party and the State. You had no personal rights, but on the other hand, the claims of feeling were more fully acknowledged" (p. 73). In spite of the insupportable difficulties the social system poses, the women conspire, bribe, and find a way to provide wine and red meat for their American guests and help make their stay in Bucharest easier than their own usual dreary way of life.

Heading the "feminine hierarchy" is Valeria Raresh, "the Roman Matron" (p. 210). Although she suffers from the dictatorship which restricts her activities, she provides a network of comfort and support to her female companions. Having lived a fulfilled life, Valeria dies "in clear consciousness" (p. 129), or, as in Sammler's words about Elya Gruner, she "did meet the terms of [her] contract." She served her country well even though she was abused and imprisoned by the totalitarian regime. She was devoted to her husband, and she took care of her sister, Gigi. She also "sent her daughter directly into cosmic space" (p. 65), allowing her to experience the liberty and opportunity American democracy offers and sparing her the hardship she herself underwent, even at the cost of separation from her only offspring. Initially, she has doubts about her daughter's American husband; Corde still believes that "the feeling of human 'agreement' would not have been possible without the old woman's acceptance" (p. 13). Before her death, Corde expresses his love for Valeria:

> Consciousness was as clear as it had ever been. No, more acute than ever, for when Minna signaled that he should take her hand . . . she pressed his fingers promptly. He said, 'We came as soon as possible.' Then, as if he should not delay the essential message, he said in his deep voice, 'I also love you, Valeria' (p. 128).

After her death, he remembers her "with extraordinary respect. Her personal humanity came from the old sources" (p. 105).

In an interview, Bellow elaborates on Corde's relationship with his mother-in-law and on the source of his reverence for women of her calibre:

> He finds that they are . . . custodians of the emotional life--protectresses of morality. I don't know what to call it except a sort of matriarchy. They are the ones who hold things together, and who fill the men with a similar feeling and with similar purposes.[3]

This depiction of women as "custodians" and "protectresses" of the highest values brings to mind James's perception of an ideal woman when he praises his mother in his *Notebooks* for having been the best keeper of values and transmitter of customs and traditions, and for having inculcated ethics and morals in her children. However, unlike James's mother, Valeria expands her horizon by joining what used to be a male's occupation. She manages to find a balance between her role as "custodian" of cultural values and the role of politician and medical doctor. And in spite of her impressive career, Valeria remains the voice of tradition and stability.

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[3] Melvyn Bragg, "In Conversation with Melvyn Bragg, Saul Bellow Talks About his New Novel, and About Women of Eastern Europe," 24.

Indeed, Valeria represents the best values Europe offers. Her human qualities, genuine interest in others, and personal values originate from "the old European life which at its most disgraceful was infinitely better than this present one" (p. 214). Minna feels the need to explain the significance of her mother: "My mother is a symbol" (p. 185). Like Sammler, Valeria is a symbol of "a marvelous old generation" (*Sammler*, pp. 73, 86).

On the one hand, the European social system is presented as highly matriarchal: the closeness in personal relationships and "the humane cooperation among women" (p. 75) are made possible by Valeria's deeply felt influence on her community. On the the other hand, American society is depicted as mostly patriarchal in both Henry James's and Saul Bellow's novels. In *The Europeans* , the absence of a mother figure is noticeable, and in *The Bostonians* , no woman displays Valeria's maternal qualities. In *Herzog* and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* , women are portrayed as too subservient or too rebellious to conform to the restraints of society. Tennie Pontritter, Madeleine's mother, devotes all her energy and time to her husband, and in the process alienates her daughter from her affection. Angela Gruner, who is totally irresponsible, drifts from one man to another, and Madeleine destroys her marriage through her affair with Herzog's best friend.

I will discuss Corde's relationships with his American relatives later in order to present the argument that the disintegration of family unity is the product of the drastic social changes which press on the family and render it ineffective. I will now argue that Corde's marriage to Minna Raresh is different from Herzog's to Madeleine because, unlike Madeleine, Minna grows up with the teachings of an established tradition.

Corde's relationship with Minna is not developed well enough to provide a major insight into the effects of mass culture on male/female relationships. Although Minna's presence in the end is necessary and crucial to Corde for his newly-found equilibrium, their marriage, like other marriages in Bellow's writings, is not completely successful. Previous to Valeria's death, Corde and Minna do not really know each other; they lead separate lives with totally different interests and outlooks on life: "She did boundless space, his beat was terra firma" (p. 261). On many occasions, Corde alludes to his wife's inexperience in human dealings. In my view, it is difficult to believe that such an established astronomer, whose "academic importance shielded Corde from the Provost" (p. 177), could be so naive and impractical. Since most of the novel is introduced through Corde's perspective, he depicts himself as the one in touch with feelings, whereas his wife is too absorbed in her scientific research. "Minna," in Corde's metaphor, "was bringing together a needle from one end of the universe with a thread from the opposite end" (p. 14).

Minna's upbringing in a stable family with established values and firm beliefs distinguishes her personality from those of female characters like Madeleine and Angela. Raised by a mother who is considered a matriarch, Minna has been exposed early to an exemplary education in which customs and traditions prevail and "old-fashioned sort of human attachment" and "sentiment of relatedness" (Roudané, p. 272) still have meaning.

Minna still lives by the values her mother taught her as a child. Although more famous than Corde, she still consults him and takes into consideration his views about life. Nevertheless, their marital relationship is strained. A "hard" scientist, Minna's domain is limited to the sky and stars. Her husband feels that she is not trained in human complexities. Faced with her mother's death, she does not know how to come to terms with it. She is also upset and bitter with her husband's endeavor to rationalize death for her. Indeed, she feels that he does not provide adequate comfort when she suffers the pain of her mother's loss. She cares for her husband, but he suspects that in her opinion, "for a complex monster like her husband, goodness might be just a mood" (p. 289). However, Corde does not refute this accusation. On the contrary, he admits that "this was how he wanted to be judged. Minna gave him a true reflection of his entire self" (p. 289). In the end, they both try to accept each other's idiosyncrasies. Whereas Minna, who is an influential scientist, but inexperienced in human relations, needs Corde to "spell things out for her", Corde, who is more experienced in human dealings, needs his eminent scholar wife's protection from the administration of the college where they both work.

Valeria's death brings Minna down to earth from her celestial preoccupations (p. 76). She, in effect, begins to see her entourage from a new perspective. "Now that Valeria was dead and she had only him, Corde, to depend upon, total revaluation was inevitable" (p. 261). When Corde joins her at Mount Palomar, he is also striving to share her exclusive scientific interests. In the end, their relationship is based on mutual respect and good intentions.

Because the Rumanian Communist government oppresses and deprives people of their human rights, they "seek haven"[4] in private life; hence, family feelings are very important to their well-being. Contrastingly, American democracy offers the majority freedom and liberty, but many interpret this easily granted privilege as simply offering fulfillment of egotistical pursuits at the expense of human relatedness.

Corde and Minna's marriage is not perfect, but they enjoy a real kind of friendship. While Corde's relationship with his wife is informed by traditions, customs, and cultural values, in mass society people are unable to achieve social relatedness. Except for Corde's closeness to his sister, most characters in the novel are wrapped in isolation and confusion. Corde and Elfrida are descended from Huguenot Irish extraction. Corde and Elfrida grew up in a very closely-knit family. Like Herzog's mother, Corde's has the major role in the makeup of her children's personalities. Consequently, they value the importance of family feeling in their interaction with others; their relationship is built on the love their mother transmitted to them.

It is true that Corde and Elfrida live in two different worlds; while Elfrida enjoys living in the glamor of money and fame, removed from her brother's intellectual domain, Corde dislikes "the commercial and promotional smoothness of the neighborhood, the showiness of the skyscrapers, the Bond Street and the Rue de la Paix connections" (p. 83). They cannot communicate nor do they share the same language, yet they "have something palpable between [them]" (p. 90).

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[4] Christopher Lash, *Haven in a Heartless World: the Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), XIII.

While Corde's relationship with his sister is embedded in love and respect for each other, despite their different outlooks on life, Corde's interaction with his nephew Mason Zaehner and his cousin Maxie Detillion are part of the failure of social and personal relatedness in mass society. Like Wallace Gruner in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* , Mason Zaehner illustrates the disintegration of the self in the modern age.

In many ways, Mason represents a sort of development from Wallace. While Wallace, who is a hedonist, is absorbed in pursuing his fantasies, Mason, in his capricious endeavors, does not refrain from inflicting harm on others. A dropout, Mason is preoccupied mainly with creating problems for others, especially for his uncle. As Dean of Students, Corde decides to become directly involved in Chicago's social and justice systems. A white student, Rickie Lester, has been killed by two blacks, Lucas Ebry, a dishwasher, and Riggie Hines, a prostitute. Corde is determined to bring the defendants to court. However, his nephew and cousin create major obstacles in Corde's pursuit of justice. Mason, an intimate friend of Lucas Ebry, organizes a campaign to quash the murder case before it comes to trial. Working with Lucas as a dishwasher, Mason takes it upon himself to identify with the "underclass". He accuses his uncle of secretly waging a war against blacks, even of racism. As a "reality instructor," he wants to teach his "ignorant uncle some lessons about

Chicago's social reality" (p. 35). He then proceeds to intimidate and threaten witnesses. However, despite his rebelliousness against his middle-class milieu and despite his active role in protecting his black criminal friend, Mason has no definite ideology. Totally bored with himself, he drifts from one cause to another, looking for excitement. Like Wallace, he does not know what he wants from life. He resents his family's wealth while he does not mind spending their money. When he fails to change the outcome of the murder case, he heads for Central America, searching for more "revolutionary" pastimes. In a discussion about his novel, Bellow elaborates on Mason's character: Mason "has a false morality. He's just out to get people."[5] Mason had for a model a father who is described as "forceful, smart, cynical, political, rich" (p. 84). "Devoid of culture [and a] lover of money" (p. 85), Zaehner senior is openly dismissive and resentful of Corde's attempts to reach out for higher values. As a "special kind of highly intelligent top-grade barbarian" (p. 231), he reckons with no higher ideal than his own authority. His aim is finally to acquire as much power as possible and to achieve control. His interest is limited to making money. Mason junior, therefore, has never been exposed to a stable environment where ethical values were taken seriously.

Mason is a product of mass culture, which does not provide individuals with a sense of who they are. In *The Origins and History and Consciousness* , Erich Neumann notes that

> The culture of a nation or group is determined by the operation within it of an archetypal canon which

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[5] Eugene Kennedy, "A Different Saul Bellow," *Boston Globe Magazine* (10 January, 1982): 22.

> represents its highest and deepest values, and which organizes its religion, art, festivals, and everyday life. So long as culture is in a state of balance, the individual is secure in the network of the cultural canon, sustained by its vitality.[6]

Corde thinks that in a mass culture the value system has collapsed. Consequently, he argues, Mason, and others like him, seek meaning in "recollectivization" and mass experience which inevitably lead to a levelling down of consciousness and of individual culture and a need to identify with this lower consciousness (Neumann, p. 383). Corde sees that his nephew's attachment to Lucas Ebry is motivated by this feeling of void which is caused by a mass culture. Since there is no "archetypal canon" to follow, people are "not securely attached to life" (p. 201). As a result, Corde speculates, "the children attached themselves to the black underclass, achieving a kind of coalescence with the demand-mass" (p. 201). In effect, "It was not so much the inner city slum that threatened us as the slum of innermost being" (p. 201). Since Mason lacks inner order, he has no discipline and no regard for any values. As a result, like Wallace, he floats in the confusion of mass society.

While Mason drifts unaware of who he is and oblivious to human qualities, Maxie Detillion is conscious of his contribution to the destructive forces of mass culture. He not only uses the media to advance himself, but also participates in the sexual madness of the age. Both Mason and Max are determined to penalize Corde for meddling and interfering with reality. Max, an exhibitionist lawyer, is a mass man. Like Sandor Himmelstein, one of Herzog's lawyers, he is "a man of the crowd. The soul of the mob. Cutting everybody down to size" (*Herzog* , 86). Max takes on Lucas Ebry and Riggie Hines's murder case not out of compassion for the blacks but to exploit the intensive publicity the media pay this case. He has a considerable flair for publicity which he uses to promote his declining practice. "Max hung out with newspapermen, gossiping and buying them drinks" (p. 68). As Corde writes in his articles, "somehow the media are more comfortable with phonies, with unprincipled men" (p. 59). Max cheats Corde out of his inherited money. Like Herzog, who is unable to see through others, or to predict their chicanery, Corde does not know how deceitful his cousin could be. It takes another dealer in chicanery to identify Max's swindling: "It was people like himself, Zaehner, who lived realistically connected with its operations, its historical position, its power--the actual American stuff" (p. 91) who informs Corde about Max's reckless dealings.

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[6] Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness* , Trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), p. 370.

The sexual disorientation which James touches on in his portrayal of Olive and Verena in *The Bostonians* becomes widespread in American society: a"pleasure society" (p. 275), as Corde sees it. While in *Herzog* , only a few are preoccupied with this craze, in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* "the sexual epidemic" becomes a palpable and inescapable reality, and in *The Dean's December*, sexuality is still a concern. However, it is no longer the major focus in the novel.

Like Valentine Gersbach, Max is "a brandishing man" (p. 93). He uses his own assets--sexual appeal--to win his case. "He sent the same sexual message to all females from a full heart" (p. 93). He is also involved with the sexual fashion of his age. Initially, he has introduced Corde to the sex joints of Chicago, "access to the Playboy Mansion and broads easy to get" (p. 95). He is an old-timer in the sexual business. Cross-examining Lester's young widow, he exhibits his sexual obsession by trying to seduce her. "He did not know that he oppressed her by wooing her" (p. 93). In an interview, Bellow places Max's sexual madness in a broader social context:

> Sexuality is interesting, or at least people say it is, though they generally mean lust. All this sexual stuff has become practically obligatory; because it's certainly a big deal commercially. And there's a demonism in this sexuality because of the big money that certifies the importance, the social success of this trend. It makes me think of Marie-Antoinette: 'Let 'em eat cake.' Now the masses are gorged on all this sexual cake, and everybody's got sexual pimples.[7]

Corde sees Max as someone suffering from "erotic collapse." A mass man like Gersbach, Max does not possess a sense of himself. His theatrical sexual exhibition and his greed for money are elements of his need to create a persona for himself. He turns the murder case trial into a circus. His theatricality in the court house, which is aimed at accentuating his ego, would be more subtle had he other assets to brag about. Corde summarizes Max's character:

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[7] William Kennedy, "If Saul Bellow Doesn't Have a True Word to Say, He Keeps his Mouth Shut," *Esquire* (February, 19882): 50.

> You became an impregnable monster if you had money, so that if to begin with you felt yourself to be monstrous you could build impregnability by making a fortune. Because then you were a force of nature, although a psychopath. Or if you were without any persona, then you *bought* a persona (pp. 100-101).

Corde thinks about and assesses this absorption with sex. In his articles, he argues that the limited modern consciousness has stressed the importance of "the peculiar curse of sexuality or carnality we're under--we've placed it right in the center of life and connect it with savagery and criminality" (p. 196). Even Corde's secretary is absorbed in this sexual hysteria. Ms. Porson, a "lustful old frump" (p. 145), wants to "put the sex into sexagenarian" (p. 144). Riggie Hines, the prostitute who is involved in the murder case, takes part in the sexual craze: "Even the way she tucked back the mannish shirt to show the tops of her breasts was pugilistic" (p. 44). She uses her sexual appeal to both seduce and destroy her customers.

Bellow thus contrasts the European matriarchal system with American society which is depicted as highly patriarchal. In Rumania, family values still carry resonance and have relevance, and people relate to each other as individuals and as integral parts of the community, despite the oppression of the totalitarian communist regime. American democracy, on the other hand, witnesses the decline of family unity, and instead of true individuals, we are presented with mass men who, since they are unattached to any set of established values, see sexuality as the advocated form of relatedness.

The sexual epidemic, which is interconnected with the lack of family feelings and the overwhelming success of mass communication, can be seen as obvious symptoms of the degeneracy of American culture. In *The Dean's December* , even more emphasis is alloted to the media, its effect on culture and the triumph of its agent, Dewey Spangler, over Corde.

Despite his personal insecurities, sexual obsessions, and infatuation with publicity, Max Detillion does not pose as much of a threat to culture as does Dewey Spangler. Because of his powerful position and world influence, Spangler has a strong impact on his surroundings. James presents characters like Baroness Munster in *The Europeans* who use art and cultural sophistication to control and manipulate their environment. However, since the Baroness is embedded in an established culture with traditions which guide and regulate her ego, the Baroness's impact in using art for concealment is limited. In Bellow's works, however, art has been widely and repeatedly misused for various egotistical purposes. In *The Dean's December*, Dewey Spangler is a self-educated parvenu who exploits poetry and philosophy to acquire money and fame.

Spangler exemplifies what Bellow describes as "publicity intellectuals." We have traced the development of such a character in Valentine Gersbach in Herzog and in Lionel Feffer in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* . In *The Dean's December*, this figure has achieved great power and therefore has stronger negative influence on culture. Spangler skillfully uses his accumulated knowledge to advance his career and to avoid getting involved in moral issues. When Corde and Spangler meet in Bucharest, they reminisce about old times. Their friendship was once based on their pursuit of common interests: "'It was the poetry and the philosophy,' said Corde. 'I had to have you. It was the Spinoza and the Walt Whitman. It was the William Blake. Nobody was interested'" (p. 116). Their understanding of the world was, then, informed by the teaching of their favorite poets and philosophers. As high school students, they shared the same values and ideas. At sixteen, they co-authored a book. But Spangler chooses to eschew this phase of his life while Corde remains attached to the learning of his adolescence. "Spangler was marveling (teasing) that this juvenilia should still be so influential. Spangler had put it behind him; for some reason Corde had not" (p. 120). Spangler takes only what is practical to achieve success and fame. As a result, he becomes a major power to be reckoned with in public life. In an interview, Bellow comments on the Corde-Spangler relationship:

> Corde was educated in Lincoln Park together with Dewey Spangler. They read poetry together. Corde took poetry seriously, whereas Spangler did not. Corde makes demands upon language. To Spangler, the columnist, words do not matter. Now how does a Corde survive? . . . It is Corde's conviction that without art, it is impossible to interpret reality, and that the degeneration of art and language leads to the decay of judgment (Roudané, p. 280).

For Spangler, art serves as a device for exploitation. His interests are not at all aesthetic; they are social. He uses his skill in literature and poetry to lure public opinion to his own point of view and to acquire fame. "Spangler, although he had risen so high, gone so far, wanted to rise higher still" (p. 244). His aim is not to open his readers' eyes to the reality of their society. Above all, he takes advantage of the weakening "authority of the ruling forms of thought" (p. 278) to propagate his egotistical pursuits.

Spangler's attitude in life is not informed by family traditions or cultural values. He does not accept his origin because he has no pride in his parents. He strives to gain victory over his handicaps. Consequently, he lies about his parents, not because they were bad people but because they were too poor for his ambitious aspirations. His relationship with his mother is marked by open hostility. Corde recalls Dewey "shrieking and grimacing" at his mother. Corde embarrassed him because

> he knew his background, remembered his father and his mother, the Spangler household, its kitchen life, the leonine formation of Mrs. Spangler's life, the flimsy silk bells of her stockings, the thigh portion falling below the gartered knee. They were touching people, especially the father. Old Spangler was bald and ruddy but did not enjoy good health. 'In the notions business,' he said. But what notions were there late in the Depression. . . . It was the ill-concealed fact that 'notions' meant peddling that embarrassed Dewey, and the embarrassment was compounded by grandiose and exuberant fantasies (p. 111).

Defiant in his attitude toward society which limited his chances as a child, Spangler is determined to conquer new territories of fame and glory. Even as a child, Spangler displays rebellious behavior, especially towards the middle class and their conventions. When Corde's mother dies, Spangler ridicules his friend's feelings of grief, making faces at him in a room full of many callers. Corde reminds him of the incident: "You came to remind me of my duty as a nihilist not to give in to the middle-class hypocrisy of mourning, and the whole bourgeois sham" (p. 233). Most important, he uses his knowledge of the arts to manipulate:

> Without the *Zarathustra* and the *Lear* , what would have become of him? Would he ever have risen so high without the cultural capital he had accumulated in Lincoln Park; would he even have gotten out of Chicago? Dewey had never wasted anything in his life; he always got his money's worth. He had made the Shakespeare pay, just as he turned his years of psychoanalysis to use. His bookish adolescence had given him an edge over the guys at the City News Bureau and his competitors in Washington, so that now he could frame his columns in high-grade intellectual plush. . . . Corde didn't mean to put Dewey down. But origins were origins. You did the best you could with them. You couldn't turn them in for a better set (pp. 120-121).

Although Spangler was never able to attend college because his family was too poor to pay for his education, he succeeds in becoming a high-level journalist with a syndicated column and a readership of millions. "He was on first-name terms with Kissinger and Helmut Schmidt. Millions read him. In his recent swing through Europe and Asia, he had interviewed Sadat, Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi" (p. 113). However, "Spangler, the world-communicator, was a maker of discourse (increasing the debris of false description)" (p. 244). Instead of illuminating the present condition, Spangler, according to the Dean, chooses to obfuscate reality. Unlike Corde, he uses his skill in writing to titillate the public appetite for sensation. His aim is not to provide knowledge or to raise awareness. He produces only what the market demands.[8] What matters to him is the fact that he has achieved the ultimate success and fame: "In touch with the Sadats and the Kissingers, the Brezhnevs and the Nixons, interpreting them to the world, Dewey was a master of the public forms of discourse. If you were going to be a communicator, you had to know the passwords, the code words, you had to signify your acceptance of the prevailing standards" (pp. 300-301).

Yet in spite of his success, Spangler is unaware of his true identity. Consequently, he creates a persona for himself which is enveloped in an aura of glamor and fame. He still carries with him grudges from the past. He has forgiven Corde neither his wealthy upbringing nor his early success in journalism. In effect, Spangler attacks him for failing to comprehend the city the way he does because of their different backgrounds. He formulates his criticism of Corde's rich family as follows: "It should be added that even in his youth Albert Corde, the son of a wealthy and privileged family, did not know the Chicago in which the rest of us were growing up. It takes the most American of all American cities to create this native son who is as unlike his fellow Americans as he can be" (p. 300). Their rivalry dates back to when they were children. Spangler's worst fear is that Corde knows or possesses something he himself does not have. "Spangler, despite his theories and for all his world eminence," Corde remarks, "was not entirely sure of himself with his old friend" (p. 235). Hence his desire for recognition, especially from Corde. In his dazzling world of achievements, Spangler would prefer to forget his past completely. "He was modest when thanked, but he'd feel slighted, even outraged, if you failed to acknowledge his influence. . . . From Corde, Spangler needed the right signs" (p. 235).

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[8] Dwight Macdonald, "Masscult and Midcult," p. 8.

Spangler's critique of Corde originates in the insecurity he feels whenever he is exposed to Corde. He denounces Corde and his articles because they provide insights about American life he, the renowned journalist, chooses to ignore. Spangler reproaches Corde's style and his way of expressing reality; he formulates his criticism as follows:

> In *Harper*'s you crossed and offended just about everybody. You might have gotten away with it if you had adopted the good old Mencken Boobus Americanus approach. Humor would have made a difference. But you lambasted them all. Really--you gave 'em hard cuts, straight across the muzzle. The obscurity of your language may have protected you somewhat--all the theorizing and the poetry. Lots of people must have been mystified and bogged down by it, and just gave up. All the better for you if they didn't read your message

> clearly. They're all happy, of course, to see you get your lumps (pp. 117-118).

Spangler's remarks on Corde's articles display the fact that both comprehend the reality of their milieux, but that there is a gap between their judgments. They choose to present the same reality differently. While Corde endeavors to present it for what it really is, Spangler chooses to obscure the truth of modern reality by using his knowledge to exploit the nuances of the language. His aim is not to disinter reality nor to present facts of life. He merely contributes to the ocean of information that is already being propagated by the media.

Corde is aware that the mass media, which "breeds hysteria and misunderstanding" (p. 301) is triumphant in mass society. In an interview, Bellow underlines the importance of the mass media in misleading public opinion:

> The problem . . . is that people are trained in superficiality. That television is the culture of the country only aggravates this. It is impossible for people to have true experience in this environment. There is a taboo against earnest work (E. Kennedy, p. 12).

Spangler resents his life-long friend who dares to take a stand and to express an opinion about opportunistic and influential people like Spangler. Corde's ability to express his beliefs, especially about intellectuals in relation to their society, and to maintain the values both he and Spangler shared as adolescents in Lincoln Park, irritates Spangler, whose aim is not to set standards but to manipulate public opinion for his own profit. Indeed, Spangler is completely baffled by

Corde's criticism of his colleagues. His desire is to feel "secure in human dealings" (p. 246) because he likes to be approved of by as many people as possible. Spangler criticizes Corde's article for including intellectuals. Corde summarizes Spangler's criticism as follows:

> Dean Corde must have offended his colleagues deeply. They should have been irradiating American society with humanistic culture, and in the Dean's book they are failures and phonies. That's what his articles reveal. I wonder whether my dear old friend realizes this. I am not sure that he has a good idea of what they were up against, the magnitude of the challenge facing them. Who would, who could make high human types of the business community, the engineers, the politicians and the scientists? What system of higher education could conceivably have succeeded? But Dean Corde is unforgiving. Philistinism is his accusation. Philistine by origin, humanistic academics were drawn magnetically back again to the philistine core of American society (p. 302).

This evaluation brings to mind Matthew Arnold's assessment of the middle class in England. He depicts them as philistine because they "not only do not pursue sweetness and light, but . . . even prefer to them that sort of machinery of business, chapels, tea-meetings" (*Culture and Anarchy*, p. 101). Corde uses the same kind of critique; he accuses the Spanglers of failing to pursue "sweetness and light" and to preserve culture which is endangered by the massive growth of mass society. Instead, they prefer to channel their energy in pursuits of material success and worldly fame. Bellow himself has expressed ambivalent feelings toward academia. He argues that "it's in the university and only in the university that Americans can have a higher life," yet he states that professors "are so eager to live the life of society like everybody else that they're not always intellectually or spiritually as rigorous as they should be."[9]

Spangler is not only a philistine intellectual but also an unscrupulous "arrivist." He is fully aware that Corde is going through a painful experience. Valeria's death, the critical reception of his polemic articles and the controversial murder trial are legitimate sources of anguish and unrest for Corde. Yet, his boyhood friend proceeds to "interview" him (p. 244). He then publishes their private talk, and by doing so commits a breach of confidentiality and violates the trust of their friendship. With his column, he succeeds in humiliating Corde publicly. As a result, Corde is forced to resign from his post as Dean of Students. Spangler's symbolic victory over Corde reinforces Bellow's view that "Modernism is in the hands of demagogues, dunces, businessmen. It belongs to the publicity intellectuals" ("Culture Now," p. 177). Where James can afford to allot symbolic victory to Basil Ransom over the forces of publicity represented by Olive Chancellor, Bellow seems to be showing that, in his time, it is impossible to contend with the media's influence on American society.

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[9] Michiko Kakutani, "A Talk with Saul Bellow: On his Work and Himself," *The New York Times Book Review* (13 Decemeber, 1981): 28.

In an interview, Bellow distinguishes between intellectuals who embrace principles and values--"inward culture," to use Arnold's term--which regulate their behavior and those who change according to external forces:

> There is something invariable, ultimately unteachable, native to the soul. A variety of powers arrive whose aim is to alter, to educate, to condition us. If a man gives himself over to total alteration I consider him to have lost his soul. If he resists these worldly powers, forces of his own can come into play (Roudané, p. 276).

This comment defines the difference between Spangler and Corde. While Spangler, the influential journalist, sells his soul by simply adhering to the forces of publicity, Corde strives to cling to the authentic teaching of the soul. In his endeavor to challenge Spangler's authority, Corde puts into practice the knowledge he accumulates from reading "the best which has been thought and said in the world" (*Culture and Anarchy* , p. 6).

As a communicator, Corde wants to make a difference. His articles cause havoc in various milieux since they reveal the social and political atrocities that permeate twentieth-century America. They also expose intellectuals, academics, and literary journalists such as Dewey Spangler for their inefficiency and failure to provide adequate guidelines for the public and for striving to cover up the reality of the social conditions.

By juxtaposing Albert Corde's and Dewey Spangler's ways of perceiving American society, Bellow evokes his concern about the growing cultural authority of the Mass Man. Corde's resignation from his office as dean conveys his failure as a concerned citizen and conscientious intellectual to preserve culture from the levelling effect of democracy; in *The Dean's December* the levelling of democracy is epitomized by mass communication, which invigorates the Spanglers and encourages them to have the last say on crucial social and political matters.

Corde's articles, which are originally intended to be merely "a review of life in [his] native city" (p. 201), turn out to become exposes chronicling the state of culture, society, and politics in the United States. His purpose is to "recover the world that is buried under the debris of false description or nonexperience" (p. 243). In the process, he investigates the conditions of a County jail, a welfare housing project, and other institutions; he also examines the working of the criminal justice system. Above all, Corde is appalled at the depressing state of the blacks. He discovers his city is suffering from cultural vacuum, moral crisis, racial violence, and depressing ghettos; yet this situation seems invisible to everyone. Corde expresses his doubt about the state of communication in American society during his first meeting with Spangler in Bucharest:

> In the American moral crisis, the first requirement was to experience what was happening and to see what must be seen. The facts were covered from our perception. More than they had been in the past? Yes, because the changes, especially the increase in consciousness--and also in false consciousness--was accompanied by a peculiar kind of confusion. The increase of theories and discourse, itself a cause of new strange forms of

> blindness, the false representations of 'communication,' led to horrible distortions of public consciousness. Therefore the first act of morality was to disinter the reality, retrieve reality, dig it out from the trash, represent it anew as art would represent it (p. 123).

Bellow and his protagonist believe that modern sensibility suffers from a problem of perception. Abuse of the language, a lack of immediate experience, an absence of the richness in human interaction result in failure of communication. During his interview with Spangler, Corde tries to explain what he wants to convey in his articles:

> I meant that we'd better deal with whatever it is that's in us by nature, and I don't see people being willing to do that. What I mainly see is the evasion. But this is a thing that works on the substance of the soul--the spirit of the time, in us by nature, working on every soul. We prefer to have such things served up to us as concepts. We'd rather have them abstract, stillborn, dead. But as long as they don't come to us with some kind of reality, as facts of experience, then all we can have instead of good and evil is . . . well, concepts. Then we'll never learn how the soul is worked on (p. 243).

The so-called "informed public opinion" can neither achieve a sense of synthesis, nor can it experience "the substance of the soul--the spirit of the time," because it is not allowed the immediate experience. It is bombarded with a mass of data, polls, and the findings of specialists. This accumulated information prevents imagination to assess and consider "concepts" in terms of human feelings. Bellow elaborates on this question in an interview:

> We come to one of the themes of my book: whether people still have any power to experience. Mr. Corde got this shock: That where there is no heart, where there is no imagination, there is no capacity to experience, really. That is what this book is about in large measure.[10]

Hence, aware of the fact that in mass society the power to experience eludes an individual, especially as human sensibility is overwhelmed by the information provided by the media, Corde takes upon himself the task of an artist to provide the vitality to experience. He writes in his articles: "The advanced modern consciousness was a reduced consciousness inasmuch as it contained only the minimum of furniture that civilization was able to install. . . because its equipment was humanly so meager, so abstract, was basically murderous" (p. 193).

Disheartened by concepts and abstractions, Corde wants to use art to evaluate and reach out for a higher perspective. Corde sees art as capable of penetrating the debris of mass society. In his endeavor, Corde subscribes to Arnold's viewpoint in "The Study of Poetry": "We should conceive of [poetry] as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto."[11] Perhaps in a less confident way than in Arnold's time, Bellow notes through his protagonist that "perhaps only poetry ha[s] the strength 'to rival the attractions of narcotics, the magnetism of TV, the excitements of sex, or the ecstasies of destruction'" (p. 187). Since "higher destinies" are more difficult to reach in Bellow's era, the function assigned to poetry becomes more difficult to fulfill. Bellow wants to establish through Corde's polemical articles an Arnoldian measure--culture--to counteract anarchy. Aware that "modern public consciousness" (p. 122) suffers from delusion generated by too much information; it does not possess the "capacity to experience" reality (p. 123). Corde thus "had taken it upon himself to pass Chicago through his own soul. A mass of data, terrible, murderous. It was no easy matter to put such things through. But there was no other way for reality to happen. Reality didn't exist 'out there.' It began to be real only when the soul found its underlying truth" (p. 266).

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[10] Cathleen Medwick, "A Cry of Strength: the Unfashionable Uncynical Saul Bellow, " *Vogue* (March, 1982): 426.

[11] Matthew Arnold, *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold* . Dwight Culler, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Riverside Editions, 1961), p. 306.

Bellow shows through Corde's articles that the task of an intellectual is "to prevent the American idea from being pounded into dust altogether" (p. 123), and to pursue the truth. Corde offers in his articles the kind of criticism that is needed to raise awareness in order for any change to occur. In one of his longest statements, Corde explains his intentions in writing the *Harper* 's articles. He claims that he has

> No sermons to preach about the death of cities or the collapse of civilization. . . . [Spangler] accuses me of abyssifying and catastrophizing. We have a weakness in America for this. Partly it's been first-class show business. . . . I most certainly did not intend to set myself up as the spokesman of the sufferer. But perhaps

> Spangler's main charge against me was that I was guilty of poetry . . . . But for a fellow like me, the real temptation of abyssifying is to hope that the approach of the 'last days' might be liberating, might compel us to reconsider deeply, earnestly (pp. 277-78).

It is easy to identify in this quotation the beliefs which Bellow repeatedly states in various articles and interviews. As an engaged writer, he strives to define the responsibility of the artist in modern America. As "moralists of seeing," Bellow and Corde undertake the responsibility of assessing their milieux using poetry as a vehicle to perceive the truth. Corde, for example, notes, "I don't think I forced poetry on Chicago. Maybe it was Chicago that forced poetry on me" (p. 238).

Bellow believes that a writer has a moral responsibility to his reader for his art. J. J. Clayton refers to Trilling's argument that Bellow examines literature from the same moral impulse as Sedgwick and Arnold. Clayton quotes Trilling as saying that

> the classic defense of literary study holds that, from the mobilizing and liberalizing of the sentiments which the study of literature brings about, there results, or can be made to result, an improvement in the intelligence, and especially the intelligence as it touches the moral life.[12]

Like Arnold, Bellow believes that literature has a moral and ethical task to perform. In an article suggestively entitled "The Writer as Moralist," he defines what he considers a writer's primary function:

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[12] John Jacob Clayton, *Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 45-46.

> The writer in any case finds that he bears the burdens of priest or teacher. Sometimes he looks like the most grotesque of priests, the most eccentric of teachers, but I believe the moral function cannot be divorced from art.[13]

In the same article, Bellow refers to Tolstoy, who, he says, also "held that a novelist should have a moral relation to his subject matter, and his definition of morality [should be] passionate. The writer should either love or hate his subject. Tolstoy condemned neutrality or objectivity, therefore, as inartistic" (p. 61).

While Corde illustrates the function of a committed communicator, Spangler is detached from his subject matter. By juxtaposing Corde's ineffectiveness as a defendant of culture and a concerned communicator with Spangler's triumph, Bellow accentuates the fact that culture is endangered by the growing authority of mass communication. Mass communication conceals the kind of reality concerned cultural critics strive to extricate from seas of information and from the debris of obfuscation. Mass communication contributes largely to the degeneracy of American culture by diluting public opinions from the pressing issues which need immediate attention. Instead of educating the people and raising much needed awareness, the media enhances the chaos of our time.

The deteriorating conditions of American society become apparent in many aspects of life. Large cities become the arena of cultural degeneracy. Violence, alienation of the races and loss of identity evoke the social anarchy which finds its vigour in urban environments, where the "Great Noise" grows so deafening that it presses on inner peace. Bellow elaborates on the noise that permeates urban milieux:

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[13] Saul Bellow, "The Writer as Moralist," *Atlantic Monthly* 211 (March, 1963): 62.

> By noise I mean not simply the noise of technology, the noise of money or advertising and promotion, the noise of the media, the noise of miseducation, but the terrible excitement and distraction created by the crises of modern life. Mind, I don't say that philistinism is gone. It is not. It has found many disguises, some highly artistic and peculiarly insidious.[14]

As in his previous novels, Bellow uses a sophisticated sensibility to penetrate modern reality and to pierce the cacophony of the urban conglomeration. Like Herzog and Mr. Sammler, Corde is disturbed by the alarming conditions in his city, the sexual madness, random violence, and the dehumanization of the blacks. The black underclass, as Bellow refers to it, is alienated from the mainstream of American democracy. This alienation is translated into frequent crimes, drug addiction, rapes, and murders. Bellow supports his protagonist's critique of the situation of the blacks by arguing in an interview that the marginalization of these "doomed people" is an outcome of the "complete failure of the imagination in this country" (W. Kennedy, p. 50).

The failure of the imagination in the United States becomes substantial in most aspects of society. In his pursuit of the truth about Chicago, Corde encounters sinister facts. He discovers "an anguish beyond the bounds of human tolerance." Within an Arnoldian perspective, he sees that in order for people to achieve a sense of stability, they must be attached to life by a culture which unites them by its high values. But Chicago is a wasteland where anarchy reigns. In the city, Corde finds a group of people detached and untethered while they float aimlessly in the chaos. *The Dean's December*, Bellow argues, is "a protest against the dehumanization of the blacks in big cities" (W. Kennedy, 50). Placing a black man's crime in a broader social context, Corde tells Spofford Mitchell's white Public Defender:

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[14] Saul Bellow, "Starting Out in Chicago,": 77

> Your defendant belongs to that black underclass everybody is openly talking about, which is economically 'redundant,' to use the term specialists now use, falling farther and farther behind the rest of society, locked into a culture of despair and crime--I wouldn't say a culture, that's another specialists' word. There is no culture there, it's only a wilderness, and damn monstrous, too. We are talking about a people consigned to destruction, a doomed people (p. 206).

Like New York, which generates unrest in Sammler, Chicago, "the contempt center of the USA," enhances the spiritual void of its inhabitants who aimlessly drift. In fact, Chicago instills in Corde a sense of apocalypse. He is struck by its chaotic atmosphere where the system of values is in a state of collapse, the worth of human existence is deflated, and the spirit of stability is impossible to achieve.

In an interview, Bellow sheds some light on his central thematic concerns in the novel. But the conditions he discovers and denounces are realities that Chicagoans have lived with for a long time:

> I wanted to write a book about Chicago, and I went out to look at the town again. This new inspection didn't inspire humor. The facts were dreadful. What were my thematic concerns, you ask? One of my themes is the American denial of real reality, our devices for evading it, our refusal to face what is all too obvious and palpable. The book is filled with protest against that evasion, against the techniques of illusion and the submission to taboos by means of which this is accomplished. Corde thinks that we are becoming wraiths, spooks. It seems to him that we have lost all capacity for dealing with experience--no capacity to think about it, no language for it, no real words (Roudané, p. 270).

Corde pictures his native country as leaving much to be desired. He is disheartened by the conditions of his city; everywhere the Dean looks, he is alarmed by what he sees. The sense of crisis is real and immediate. His distress with the situation culminates in his generalization that "nobody had a good connection or knew what racket he was in--his real racket" (p. 32).

Violence, which is typical of big cities, keeps recurring in Bellow's novels as the most alarming aspect of the deterioration of the proper forces of culture which restrain and guide individuals' wild tendencies toward destruction. Like *Herzog* and *Mr. Sammler's*

Planet , *The Dean's December* links violence to the state of culture in mass society. It presents two violent scenes which express the estrangement of people in large cities and the self-destructive forces that undermine spiritual stability in a mass man.

Gene Lewis's case illustrates the urge of modern man to invoke violence as a solution to his self-created insurmountable problems. Before his sentencing for murder, his girlfriend, who hollows out a boy's edition of Ivanhoe to hide a magnum revolver, makes his crime possible. He disarms the guards and fires a single shot into the floor to show the judge that he intends to have his way. However, racing out of the courtroom, he takes the wrong elevator, and when the door opens, a group of detectives shoot him ten times in the head (pp. 161-62). When a man like Lewis can make use of a revolver, the outcome is a waste of human lives.

Likewise, the Spofford Mitchell case illustrates not only the growing and alarming interest which violence generates in a society dominated by mass media, but also the pernicious interaction between whites and blacks in American cities. Mitchell, a black man, abducts Sally Sathers, a white young suburban housewife and mother of two children. He brutally rapes her several times and locks her in his car trunk between attacks. He then drives her to a deserted place where he shoots her in the head and disposes of her body in the trash. According to Corde, Mitchell must feel that the only way he can relate to anyone, especially to a white woman, is through "genital literalness" (p. 204). Like the black pickpocket in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* , Mitchell expresses his authority only in his sexual potency. Corde comments:

> I see Spofford Mitchell and Sally Sathers, two separateness, two separate and ignorant intelligences. One is staring at the other with terror, and the man is filled with a staggering passion to break through , in the only way he can conceive of breaking through--a sexual crash into release (p. 204).

This brings to mind Richard Wright's novel *Native Son* which depicts the physical and psychological separation of the white and black races in American society. Like Mitchell, Bigger, the black protagonist, does not know how to relate to Mary Dalton, the daughter of his white employers, whom he smothers in a panic. However, there is a major difference between the two murders. Mitchell plans and executes the murder, while Bigger, who is not used to his new freedom, does not know how to communicate with a white woman. It seems to me that Bellow's depiction of the crime illustrates the point that the black and white races in the United States are growing further and further apart.

Mitchell's indifference and insensitivity to his victim as he traumatizes her emotionally and psychologically before he kills her is a case in point of the alarming alienation of the black and white races in the United States. Similarly, Mitchell's white defender's refusal to get emotionally involved in his client's crime reveals white Americans' self-absorption and indifference to the social and ethnic crisis. Varennes refuses to admit that through his client's crime an atrocity has occurred. He fails to acknowledge that this crime is a product of the disorientation and confusion created by mass culture.

> We sat there explaining evils to each other, to pass them off somehow, redistribute the various monstrous elements, and compose something the well-disposed liberal democratic temperament could live with. Nobody actually said, 'An evil has been done.' No, it was rather, 'An unfortunate crazed man destroyed a woman, true enough, but it would be wrong enough of us to consider ourselves judges of this crime, since its causes lie in certain human and social failures' (p. 202).

As a public figure, showing a "preference for decent liberal thought," Varennes can make only "limited concessions" (p. 206). He offers inconsequential and symbolic gestures in response to any public demand for decency. He is unwilling to risk his well-being or implicate himself in his client's crime. It is, however, simplistic to reduce the complexity of the problem to "certain human and social failures."

Equally detached and protected from the dreadful reality of Chicago are most of the white middle-class: La Salle Street businessmen, politicians, and lawyers. In their wealth and comfort, they have garrisoned themselves from the dangers of Chicago's ghettos. They are complacently withdrawn and absorbed in their material achievements. Bellow incriminates the whites for failing to get involved: "I'm speaking up for the black underclass and telling the whites they're not approaching the problem correctly" (W. Kennedy, p. 50).

This selfish preoccupation with one's class and wealth applies also to Elfrida, Corde's sister, and her new husband's rich family.

Elfrida's brother-in-law and his wife throw an elaborate birthday party for their dog. They even provide lobster, sturgeon, champagne, and balloons. Removed from the deteriorating conditions in Chicago's ghettos, the hostess, "in her cheerful American heart," innocently proclaims, "and all living creatures--all!--were equal" (p. 294). This remark ironically underlines the complete lack of human interaction in big cities. It also sharply contrasts the wealthy and powerful with the squalid self-destruction of the blacks. In a "pleasure society" (p. 275), those who have money are preoccupied with spending it; the others, meanwhile, are still floating on the margin. Removed from the poverty that permeates the ghetto life and protects her in her Lakeshore Drive high-rise apartment, the hostess is completely unaware of the facts of American life.

Bellow has always maintained a note of hope in his protagonists' perceptions of their human condition and rejected the "Wasteland" view about modern society that is so prevalent among twentieth-century writers. In the introduction to *Great Jewish Short Stories* , he advocates acceptance of the human fate; "We are all such accidents. We do not make up history and culture. We simply appear, not by our own choice. We make what we can of our condition with the means available. We must accept the mixture as we find it--the impurity of it, the tragedy of it, the hope of it" (p. 16). But in *The Dean's December* , this acceptance of the human condition as God wills it gives away to almost complete despair. Hope has dissipated in face of the destructive aspects of urban milieu. The uncertainty about the fate of culture which overshadows the closing of the book shows Bellow's deeply-felt anxiety. In an interview, he expresses his sense of alarm. Because of the decline of values, Chicago evokes in him a sense of torpor and emptiness:

> That [*The Dean's December*] was a *cri de coeur*. I just could no longer stand the fact that the city and the country were in decay under our very eyes and people would not talk about the facts. They might talk about money to change things, but never about what was actually happening. No one levels any more. So it was a cry. But I don't know whether anyone heard it.[15]

This "*cri de coeur* " reflects Bellow and Corde's sense of alarm at the state of American culture. Corde's symbolic defeat in the end accentuates the sense of alarm which mass culture in Chicago and the United States instigates in Bellow.

In spite of the critical condition of American culture, there are still possibilities which, although they seem minimal, at least convey the feeling that there are some persons in society who are genuinely concerned about the kind of life they lead. The concerned people who "stand out in moral stature" (Kennedy, p. 50) as alternatives to the mass men, and who exemplify true individualism, are two black men. One is Rufus Ridpath, the director of the County jail, who has worked hard to introduce reforms in the jail system; however, in the process, he has lost his reputation and his job. The other man, Toby Winthrop, a former heroin-addict who successfully cures himself, has established a detoxification center for severely addicted people.

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[15] D. J. R. Bruckner, "A Candid Talk with Saul Bellow," *New York Times Magazine* (15 April, 1984): 52.

These two prove that the caring of any individual can make a difference.

Corde's love for his wife seems to be another possibility in the novel. When he accompanies her to Mount Palomar at the end of the novel, he strives to share her interests. He wants his love for her to "bring Minna back from outer space" (p. 224). But like the thematic use of the moon as a possible outlet from earth's apocalypse in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* , Minna's scientific preoccupation with the stars is also symbolical. It seems as if the only setting where the love between Corde and Minna can be possible is in the high realm of the sky.

Unlike Sammler, who refutes Dr. Lal's suggestion of the moon as a possible solution to the modern crisis, emphasizing that "the planet [is] our mother and our burial ground" (p. 167), Corde is so overwhelmed by the critical situation in modern cities that he is ready to consider any immediate if impractical resolution. His despair is so obvious in a cry like this: "If there was another world, this was the time for it to show itself. The visible one didn't bear looking at" (p. 189).

In face of the distressing social, political and cultural conditions in the urban milieu, the revival of warm feelings in Corde and Minna's marriage seems to be too much of a fragile positive force. Bellow insists that the recovery of genuine feelings between husband and wife is real. Corde comments that despite her reservation and awkwardness, "his wife, unskilled in human dealings, was offering him support from her own main source. What came through Minna's words was that she was alone in the world; and with him; she did have him, with all his troubling oddities; and he had her" (p. 308). However, we wonder if this love is substantiated only in space where they can transcend the pressing social reality of Chicago. Throughout the book, Corde and Minna's relationship is marked by a lack of communication. They hardly express their feelings for each other. In an interview, Bellow, however, stresses the newly-found love between the couple as a strength which will pull them closer in future possible difficulties:

> It [love] is real. Why shouldn't it be? It is real, and therefore it is an achievement. The estrangement of human beings from one another is a fact of life, no longer a hypothetical matter. The price you pay for the development of consciousness is the withering of the heart. Therefore one must will the recovery of feeling, and one must use one's intelligence, too; one must take private reckoning, at which we have become very skillful, and turn it around, force its reversal. . . . Corde recognizes the necessity of ennobling reckoning. He comes to understand that we carry about, within, an iceberg which has to be melted. Intellect, itself a source of coldness, must become involved in the melting project. To have intellect devoid of feeling is to be crippled. To recover the power to walk--in feeling--we begin by calling the will (Roudané, p. 270).

Nevertheless, this affirmation of love and harmony in Corde and Minna's personal relationship is removed from the human context. The ending of the novel is not really justified since the reader is not adequately prepared for a sudden flow of emotions after all the dryness that characterizes Corde and Minna's marriage. Corde's delight in the crisp but pleasant coldness of Mount Palomar is neither real nor convincing because it is far removed from human dealings.

Furthermore, the positive possibility for the continuation of culture embodied in Valeria's human personality seems fragile in the face of inescapable reality. Valeria's death accentuates the fact that as much as Bellow wants European traditions and values as alternatives to American mass culture, they are, in fact, disappearing with the aging or death of the figures who emblematize them. When Valeria dies, she takes with her a mode of human relationships which is informed by European humanist culture. Like Elya Gruner's death in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* , Valeria's leaves a vacuum which no one seems qualified or able to fill.

In its critique of American society, *The Dean's December* is Bellow's most dismal novel about the human condition in mass society. The roots of the urban chaos, random violence, alienation of the urban population from its environment, and the dislocation in human relatedness lie in the failures of a whole culture. American culture is unable to inform its members with "a grace of purpose" and connections between past, present and future. Consequently, unattached to any form of order, people float in the confusion of mass society. Corde is not interested in playing at apocalypse and "this poor man's make believe" which he considers "a dangerous distraction". Yet, although he wants to believe that there is a chance "that he might, at last, be headed in the right direction" (p. 32), the deteriorating reality of American culture discourages this hope.

Bellow usually places ultimate virtue in human connections as alternatives to mass society. However, in *The Dean's December* , the possibility he provides in his depiction of the European females' relationships is slowly dying out with Valeria's death. Similarly, Corde's affection for his wife seems too fragile to withstand the uproar of events and the upheaval of the environment. But, Corde's articles, like Rufus Ridpath and Toby Winthrop's endeavors to make a difference, suggest that the virtue of true individuals is still possible. However, in the face of the destructive forces of mass culture embodied in the strong influence of Dewey Spangler and the growing control of the mass media which generate social disorder, these humane gestures remain scarce and ineffective. Corde's defeat in the end allows him to find out about his function and limitations as a concerned intellectual; it is also a strong indication that culture faces a severe crisis.

VII. Conclusion

James and Bellow look at culture from an Arnoldian perspective: "Culture being a pursuit of our total perfection."[1] They perceive that this "total perfection" can be earned by only a small minority of people who have the ability to discriminate. James does not see the common man as a possibility for culture, nor does he concern himself with this type of character. The focus of his writing is on the small minority. In *The Speech and Manners of American Women* , James accepts the idea that a number of common people will be sacrificed to produce the aristocrat:

> The 'presentability' of the most pleasing specimens . . . is expensively arrived at. . . arrived at by a sufficiently ruthless process of selection; it is at the cost of certain others, at the best, of certain obscured, hindered, sacrificed growths, that the happiest examples of any rich human efflorescence have hitherto managed to bask in the light. . . the main clue in the great complexity is the number of common figures and common lives required always and everywhere to fertilize the ground for the single type of the gentleman.[2]

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[1] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* , (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 6.

[2] Henry James, *The Speech and Manners of American Women* , ed. E. S. Riggs (Lancaster House Press, 1973), p. 19

James's portrayal of Basil's reactionary and narrow ideas demonstrates that even a gentleman is not without his limitations. But James's most penetrating criticism is directed toward Olive for sacrificing her taste for the feminist cause. Olive uses and collaborates with the media, but her endeavor to change the traditional order of society by giving women power does not suit James's sense of social hierarchy.

Bellow 's insight into culture is also conservative although his stand on American democracy is equicocal. *The Dean's December* does not leave the reader with much hope for the future of American culture. Bellow demonstrates this kind of alarmed concern elsewhere as well. He contends in his Nobel lecture speech that since we live in a period of disintegration, the proper forces of what I have been calling culture no longer provide the individual with protection from the anarchy generated by the "Great Noise"; therefore, "we stand open to all anxieties. The decline and fall of everything is our daily dread; we are agitated in private life and tormented by public questions"[3].

Nevertheless, though Bellow repeatedly underlines the fact that "there is a violent uproar," he does not totally give in to despair. Although Corde is unable to counteract the destructive forces of mass culture represented in Spangler, the media man, culture in my view has not disappeared. Bellow stresses that there are some possibilities for culture in the presence of some individuals who concern themselves with keeping human values alive. The actions of these individuals do not provide an immediate solution to the pressing problem facing culture, but the idea that Bellow emphasizes is that "[w]e are still able to think, to discriminate, and to feel. The purer, subtler, higher activities have not succumbed to fury or to nonsense"[4] Dr. Elya Gruner's generous support for Sammler and Shula, Rufus Ridpath's and Toby Winthrop's endeavors to help others indicate that individuals who care about society can make a difference. Their actions may seem minimal in face of the complexity and enormity of the forces generated by mass culture, but they indicate that there is genuine concern about the state of culture.

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[3] Saul Bellow, "The Nobel Lecture," *American Scholar* 46 (1976-77): 321.

Bellow juxtaposes a genuine individual with a mass man in terms of motivation. He frequently uses the consciousness of a highly educated male as the central standard of evaluation. Herzog's, Sammler's and Corde's discerning sensibilities allow them to see the severity of the problems surrounding culture. Their traditional heritage provides them with insight into sensitive issues, but, in my opinion, taints their views, especially toward women. Like Basil Ransom, Herzog and Sammler cannot see women as equals. The patriarchal system they fight to keep grants them authority they use to try to keep women under their control.

Culture is a way of life which includes values, beliefs, characteristics and interests of a group of people. It is not static, and it does not belong to a few. Mass culture has a disarming but negative effect, especially on those who have been reduced to "hypnotic receptivity" by the media. However, it is inconceivable that groups of people could forsake all their spiritual and cultural values. In every generation, there will be some who will strive for "good sense, clarity, [and] truth."[5]

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[4] "The Nobel Lecture," p. 321.

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[5] Saul Bellow, *Herzog* , p. 28.

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